

# THE TWILIGHT ZONE

ROD SERLING'S

NEW JOURNEYS  
OF THE IMAGINATION

MAGAZINE

JANUARY 1982/\$2

EIGHT EXTRAORDINARY  
STORIES THAT OPEN  
NEW DIMENSIONS

SANTA VISITS THE  
TWILIGHT ZONE IN  
ROD SERLING'S  
CLASSIC TV SCRIPT

AN INSIDER'S VIEW  
OF LOVECRAFT

BOOKS, MOVIES,  
SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE,  
AND ... ALWAYS ...  
THE UNEXPECTED

## 'GHOST STORY'

FULL-COLOR PREVIEW  
OF THE NEW HORROR BLOCKBUSTER  
WITH AN AUTHOR'S EYE-VIEW  
FROM PETER STRAUB

EXPLORE INNER SPACE:  
'MISS MOUSE & THE 4TH DIMENSION'  
BY ROBERT SHECKLEY

## ROD SERLING RECALLS HIS MOST MEMORABLE CHRISTMAS

TWILIGHT CASTS A SPELL  
IN 'OF SLEDS AND FORTY WINTERS'

THE CLASSIC HAUNTED HOUSE TALE  
BY GHOST STORY MASTER  
J. SHERIDAN LE FANU

EXCLUSIVE TZ INTERVIEW:  
**FRANK BELKNAP LONG**  
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THE MASTER OF MODERN HORROR

AN ACCIDENT EXPOSES  
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BY REGINALD BRETNOR

THE JOY & TERROR OF MIRACLES:  
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A TALE OF JAZZ, THE DEVIL,  
AND DEATH BY PARKE GODWIN

'TWILIGHT ZONE' ON TV  
GAHAN WILSON  
THEODORE STURGEON



# ROD SERLING'S THE TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE

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# "The sunsets were red . . .

... the nights were long, and the weather pleasantly frosty; and Christmas, the glorious herald of the New Year, was at hand, when an event—still recounted by winter firesides, with a horror made delightful by the mellowing influence of years—occurred in the beautiful little town of Golden Friars, and signalized, as the scene of its catastrophe, the old inn known throughout a wide region of the Northumbrian counties as the George and Dragon."

So begins "The Dead Sexton," by the Victorian ghost-story master **J. SHERIDAN LEFANU**. The tale catches LeFanu in an uncharacteristically cozy mood, and in *An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street*, reprinted in this issue (along with six new woodcuts by that most versatile and dependable of artists, **JOSE REYES**), LeFanu's tone is positively humorous.

But there's another, far bleaker side to the man, as anyone knows who's read such classics of cruelty as "Green Tea," "The Familiar," "Madam Crowl's Ghost," and "Schalken the Painter"—and as becomes clear in the profile of LeFanu contributed by literary sleuth **MIKE ASHLEY**. We noted, in the last issue, that Ashley has written the invaluable reference book *Who's Who in Horror and Fantasy Fiction*. He has also written four volumes of a *History of the Science Fiction Magazine*, has edited a number of sf and weird fiction anthologies, and is currently working on a biography of supernatural writer Algernon Blackwood. Ashley's taste for literary research began, he says, when he tried to locate stories that, as a child, he'd heard recounted by his father. Since one of the reasons people read fantasy is to recapture, if only fleetingly, some of childhood's wonder and terror, the genesis of Ashley's interest seems only appropriate.

Speaking of genesis . . . In this issue we cheerfully violate one of the magazine world's most cherished taboos by featuring a genuine, honest-to-God Adam and Eve story, a breed that most editors have exiled to Siberia. *Final Version* seems a special case, though; it displays the same irreverent wisdom you'll find in Mark Twain's "Letters from the Earth."



Bretnor



Morrissey



Johnson



Willis



Godwin



Sturgeon

Twain retells the Eden myth from a distinctly humane point of view. He ridicules God's warning about the forbidden fruit: the penalty for eating it was death, but the word would have had no meaning for Adam and Eve.

Furthermore, Twain has nothing but scorn for the punishment God visits upon his luckless creations. "The best minds will tell you," he observes, "that when a man has begotten a child, he is morally bound to tenderly care for it, protect it from hurt, shield it from disease, clothe it, feed it, bear with its waywardness, lay no hand upon it save in kindness and for its own good, and never in any case inflict upon it a wanton cruelty. God's treatment of his earthly children, every day and every night, is the exact opposite of all that, yet those best minds warmly justify these crimes, condone them, excuse them, and indulgently refuse to regard them as crimes at all, when he commits them . . ."

"God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden, and eventually assassinated them. All for disobeying a command which he had no right to utter. But he did not stop there, as you will see. He has one code of morals for himself, and quite another for his children. He requires his children to deal justly—and gently—with offenders, and forgive them seventy-and-seven times; whereas he deals neither justly nor gently with anyone, and he did not forgive the ignorant and thoughtless first pair of juveniles even their first small offense and say, 'You may go free this time. I will give you another chance.' On the contrary! He elected to punish *their* children, all through the ages to the end of time, for a trifling offense committed by others

before they were born. He is punishing them yet."

*Final Version* is a story Twain might have approved of. Its author, **JOHN MORRISSEY**, lives, if not in Eden, at least in rural New Hampshire, where he teaches English lit at Franklin Pierce College. Aside from much excellent short fiction, he's the author of the fantasy *Graymantle* (Playboy Press) and is completing an sf novel, *The Mansions of Space*.

From God and man to god and woman . . . **REGINALD BRETNOR** returns in this issue with a cautionary tale about relations with immortals, and about the golden dreams that lie within even the humblest of mortals. If, like us, you read *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* back in the late 1950s and '60s, you may never be able to scan the menu in an Italian restaurant without thinking of a certain outrageous pun—"Don't you know that you've just had a first-class chicken catch a Tory?" It can be found in an episode of "Through Time and Space with Ferdinand Feghoot," a series of comical tall tales which Bretnor wrote under the anagrammatical pseudonym "Grendel Briarton," and which ended in puns about a worldwide "nude rally tea pact" and "the pair o' doxies of time travel" and the like. (The series was later parodied by Randall Garrett; Feghoot became "Benedict Breadfruit," and one of the more improbable tales ended with a nod to the original's creator: "I believe I can get that reg annulled, *Bête Noir*.") Bretnor has been writing sf since 1947, and has edited a number of critical symposia on the subject, including the first major work of this kind—*Modern Science Fiction, Its Meaning and Its Future*—back in

1953. He's also covered sf for two editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which means he's probably been quoted (and plagiarized) in untold thousands of student papers all over the world.

CONNIE WILLIS is a highly accomplished writer whose work you'll be seeing more of in TZ. One of her stories, "Daisy in the Sun," was up for a 1980 Hugo, and she appeared this past summer in a *Berkley Showcase* volume. Ace has just brought out her novel *Water Witch*, written with Cynthia Felice. The story we print here, *Lost and Found*, is one of the best works of religious fantasy we've ever read, and should garner for her, at the very least, several more award nominations.

This issue marks VIC JOHNSON's first appearance in a national fiction magazine, but he's made his living writing and designing for a number of industrial and outdoors journals in the Midwest. We can't think of a more perfect story for *Twilight Zone's* Christmas issue than the haunting *Of Sleds and Forty Winters*.

Welcome back to TOM COLLINS, indefatigable filmgoer, playgoer, and bibliophile, who allows us to meet one of the enduring names in American fantasy, FRANK BELKNAP LONG; to PARKE GODWIN, whose Arthurian novel *Firelord* was a World Fantasy Award nominee, and who's been hailed by Algis Budrys as "a major find, a convincing researcher, and a master novelist" ("With its superb prose and sweeping imagination," writes Budrys in a forthcoming review, "*Firelord* brings to life a realer King Arthur than we have ever seen before"); and to ROBERT SHECKLEY, whose novel *The Game of X* spawned the recent Disney movie *Candorman*, which in turn has spawned Baskin Robbins's "Candorman Crunch," making Sheckley the first science fiction writer ever to have inspired a new flavor of ice cream.

Starting next month, Sheckley will become TZ's book reviewer, for with this issue THEODORE STURGEON bids farewell to our magazine in order to devote himself more fully (and here, at least, is a matter for rejoicing) to his own fiction, something the world has seen far too little of lately. Ted is a decent, fair-minded soul, a friend to

good writing and to writers everywhere. It was a privilege to share these pages with him.

**Better Late Than Never Department:** One occasionally reads about convicted criminals who, long after their deaths, are officially cleared of any wrongdoing, usually through the efforts of their widows or descendants. While the revised verdict comes years too late to matter to the men themselves, there's presumably a certain solace, for the living, in knowing that at last the record has been set straight.

Similarly, there've been a number of factual errors which have found their way into our pages over the past few months and which, even at this late date, should still be acknowledged and corrected.

For the record, then, let us note that the dramatic photos of *Halloween II* in our November issue were the work of Kim Gottleib; that it was Eoin Sprott (and none other) who constructed *Wolfen's* wolf puppets; and that the celebrated sf story "Farewell to the Master" was written by (and how did this slip past us?) Harry Bates.

In the wake of our two-part TZ Interview with him, Richard Matheson notes that it was Bert Granet who produced *The Twilight Zone's* final year, and he has kindly supplied some corrections to our article "Matheson in the Movies." He writes: "The third Kolchak script I did with William F. Nolan was entitled *The Night Killers*. *Dying Room Only* was produced by Alan Epstein for Lorimar, which also did *Trespass*. *The Strange Possession of Mrs. Oliver* was produced by Stan Shpetner, not Dan Curtis."

Finally, let us note that John Brahm should have been credited as director of the *Twilight Zone* episode "Mr. Dingle, the Strong." (Thanks to alert reader Robert Anderson for pointing this out.)

Occasionally, in future issues, our Show-by-Show Guide will list credits that differ slightly from those on your tv screen. However, before you take pen in hand, be warned: more often than not it will be the tv version that's in error and the magazine version that's correct. Trust us.

—TK

# THE TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE

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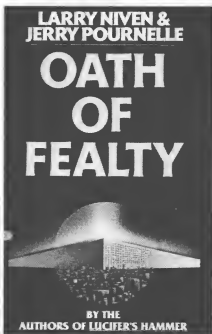
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# Books

by Theodore Sturgeon

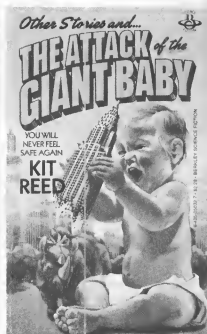
The big one this month comes from the practiced pens (actually, they're word processors) of Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle. It's **Oath of Fealty** (Timescape, \$13.95 in hardcover) and it deals with an arcology—the gigantic one-building city usually exemplified by the work of Paolo Soleri and the two mile-high skyscrapers with which Frank Lloyd Wright wished to replace every other structure on Manhattan Island. Todos Santos is the near-future possibility presented to us, a single structure a thousand feet high on a two-square-mile base and supplying everything its residents could possibly want, at the immediate price (besides rent and utilities) of accepting total, though discreet, surveillance, and the far more subtle one of becoming something different from the other residents of the surrounding city, which happens to be Los Angeles. This difference is a cultural drift, analogous to genetic drift, only faster. Living with taken-for-granted convenience and security, day in and day out, would be quite a different thing from making it in the sprawling megalopolis, and would rather quickly produce a different kind of citizen. We get to watch this happening; and along with it, the most meticulous description of the design, construction, and management of this hive, together with its ecological, social, and political impact. Along with all this, we see in action a device similar to that described in the memorable *TechnoPeasant's Survival Manual*: "The ultimate computer will be grown in a Petri dish and interfaced with the human brain." Some of the people here have such an implant, and its use and effects are beautifully worked out. The whole thing is cast in an exciting, swift, and suspenseful narrative—all in all, a fine reading experience.

Surely one of the most important novels now afloat, and one of the finest, is Octavia Butler's *Wild Seed* (Timescape, \$2.75)—at last in paperback. Written with power, passion, and compassion, it is, as



well, as unique a story as this field has yet produced. The narrative itself begins in the seventeenth century, but we learn that it goes back some four thousand years. It continues forward to the period just before the outbreak of the Civil War. Note: no future extrapolations, no space ships, no zap guns. In this alone it forms the perfect gift for the yahoo who refuses to read science fiction because he knows all about *Buck Rogers* and *Star Wars*. Butler's style is up to the highest of anyone's literary standards; the competence of her narrative design, and the deftness of the swerves and turns of her plot, are to be envied. She is always in charge; and the thing that shines over the whole work is the sense of conviction, of values ardently believed in. The story of the long-lived black woman Anyanwu and the perhaps-immortal Doro, and the wild talents of their seed, will remain with you long, long after you've thoughtfully put the book down.

Charles L. Grant needs no introduction to adherents of horror and fantasy. As an anthologist he faithfully delivers the kind of moody



grue that fog-and-fang addicts most enjoy. *Tales from the Nightside* (Arkham House, \$11.95) is a fine collection of his own work, with a Stephen King introduction and striking drawings by Andrew Smith—the kind of book (like all of the Arkham product) that is a pleasure to have and to hold. The stories have the stamp, the feel, of Lovecraft and of Bradbury; Grant's own injection is the realistic inclusion of family conflict, with all its minutiae—the man whose love for his kid is a very mixed thing, the woman whose contentment with husband and marriage is beginning to fray, kids' secrets which are terribly real to them—or just terribly real. In short, his aim is to make you feel that your comfortable neighborhood is but a thin veil over nameless horrors, and more often than not he succeeds.

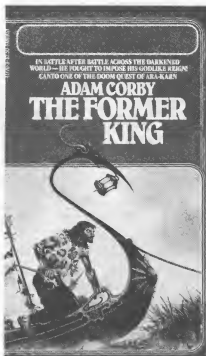
Somtow Sucharitkul is a spell-spinner, often a spellbinder, and has here illuminated something for me. From time to time one comes across the criticism that so much, perhaps too much, of modern science fiction is "American" in texture, something I have always regarded as a kind of

overseas nitpicking, impressed as I am with the width and breadth and depth of sf concepts. Even my rather limited exposure to Soviet sf indicates that except for an occasional capsule of political ideology, their reach and spread is comparable to ours. Now along comes Sucharitkul with a completely different texture, and an exposition of different values, different ways of thinking—different from anything produced by the American writer; suddenly, then, I see the justice of the criticism (not a pejorative one, by the way) that our work is demonstrably American; for to the Japanese and distinctively other cultures, it must seem stridently so. Anyway, enjoy this book, with its fascinating suggestion that the great whales produced manlike creatures who infiltrated and interbred with the Japanese and produced their preoccupations with beauty and with death; and all of this as a step toward the stars from a dying earth. It's called *Starship and Haiku* (Timescape, \$2.50).

Kit Reed has been sprinkling her spice, tart and sweet and sometimes terrifying and often downright outrageous, over the body of science fiction since 1958. Not since Margaret St. Clair has there been so deft and unpredictable a storyteller. In quality her stories vary from excellent all the way down to good, and I heartily recommend *Other Stories and The Attack of the Giant Baby* (Berkley, \$2.25)—and if you think that title is outrageous, wait until you see the cover!

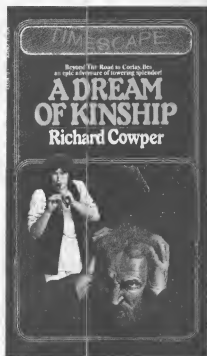
F. Paul Wilson gives us a very gothic Gothic with *The Keep* (Morrow, \$12.95). The novel, set in Romania during World War II, contains an elderly scholar, his beautiful daughter, a contingent of German soldiers, a detachment of SS men, their two commanding officers who hate and despise each other, a handsome stranger, and a very original vampire. All these components interact satisfactorily and, on occasion, surprisingly. If you like big moody Gothics, you'll love this one.

Adam Corby writes very well. His



*The Former King* (Timescape, \$2.50) builds a ragged world into which comes a shipwrecked warrior, who rises in this volume to be the great warlord of the north. On the way there is much muscle-cracking hand-to-hand combat, much burning and pillage... You've seen it before, of course, and you know the hero always wins. But Corby has the gift; he keeps you wondering when you know you needn't. This promises to be a trilogy or more.

... *A Dream of Kinship* (Timescape, \$2.50) is Richard Cowper's transplant of medieval England into the thirtieth century, replete with the clash of arms and the whispers of intrigue, as the "Kinsmen" strive to sustain a rebirth of faith. A skillful job... *Quas Starbrite* (Bantam, \$1.95) is just right for the *Star Wars* trade, or maybe I mean *Galactica*. Chronicling the prowess of undefeatable Quas, James R. Berry is right in fashion... *Hot Time in Old Town* (Bantam, \$2.25) by Mike McQuay, is exactly what its cover proclaims it to be: the adventures of a twenty-first century hardheeling private eye. "Can a hardboiled private eye beat the odds in the back alleys of tomorrow?" demands the cover. Answer: Of course... A neat little curiosity, very probably



to be a collector's item, is *Unsilient Night* (NESFA Press, Box G, MIT Branch Post Office, Cambridge, MA 02139; \$10.00), the 1981 Boskone book, by Tanith Lee. Only a thousand copies are in print. Between its hard covers are two short stories, ten poems, and one perfectly gorgeous portrait photograph. I rather liked the stories; I found the poetry undisciplined.

And this is farewell. I have enjoyed riding TZ's masthead more than I have words or space to convey. You have a good book here, with a good editor; long may they wave. As for me, I'm going to apply my energies and attentions to my own work instead of others'. I have a novel going (for the first time in more than twenty years); the working title is *Star Anguish*. I do hope you will like it. This is not, by the way, my slow-growing *Godbody*; that's the big one, evolving in its own massive pace.

Please do everything you possibly can to get this species off this planet. If we don't, we could die here. If we do, we will live forever; there are no limits to growth if we can take this path. I'm not fighting for my life, but for our immortality. Thanks for listening. 17

# Screen

by Gahan Wilson

**Heavy Metal** (Columbia)  
Directed by Gerald Potterton  
Screenplay by Dan Goldberg  
and Len Blum

Offhand you would think that if there was such a thing as a surefire combination, it would be fantasy and the animated film. In theory it should be extremely difficult to avoid at least flashes of excellence if you joined the two, but that does not seem to be the case. A kind of curse seems to linger over the marriage, and I can't think precisely why.

On the one hand you have a creator bent on the genesis of a world unique to his imagination, and on the other a fantastic medium completely capable of bringing to life anything *whatever* that this creator can create. By now, surely—the magic technique's been around for over fifty years—we should have experienced staggering triumphs from this blend of art and technology.

We have not. What is amiss?

It's true that no towering geniuses have been attracted to the field; there have been no Goyas nor Bosch's nor Blakes (imagine William Blake unleash'd on animation!) involved to date, but there have been some extremely clever and talented people working on it, and working very hard, to widen its horizons and open up its promise. Why does it remain so claustrophobic?

It got off to a very good start with the efforts of Winsor McCay, the brilliant creator of the comic strip *Little Nemo*, wherein he regularly demonstrated a positively eerie talent for odd motion effects and spatial dislocations on the grand scale. McCay decided to go on the lecture circuit with an animated film he'd designed for the purpose—a film in which a lovable-looking dinosaur named Gertrude would interact with him before the audience, drinking a glass of water McCay held up to it, coming and leaving at the artist's command, and



"... pulverizing their innocent minds with witches and vultures and skeletons chained in dungeons." Walt Disney's first feature-length cartoon, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, provided classic confrontations between the very very good and the very very evil.

so on. Recently, these films, and a tiny scattering of other work, have been re-released for general viewing, thanks to dedicated efforts of historians, and they demonstrate a charm and a level of drawing one wishes had been followed a little more closely by those who came after.

They were not, and for two excellent reasons—the first being simply that McCay's successors had nowhere near his talent nor his draftsmanship; the second being that, if they were to get beyond the tiny scale of his production, they would have to abandon his painstaking ways and hire armies of other artists even less skillful than themselves. These stark realities led to the development of a school of drawing which was slavishly followed by all animators for years, and which has subliminally affected the entire field to this day.

We are all of us familiar with the conventions of this quasi-official style of animation, even if some of us have paid it no conscious attention. The body and its parts are reduced to bloblike circles

whenever possible, the little finger is removed from the hand for reasons of economy, and the limbs do not bend as though they contained bones, but curl like spaghetti. Everything is simple and undetailed, and if the backgrounds are sometimes shaded and convey a feeling of depth, the figures moving before them are always resoundingly flat. Some great stuff has been done by this school of the easily teachable and speedily drawable doodle: Mickey Mouse, of course, and Donald and the rest of that gang; Bugs Bunny and the Looney Tunes group; and Max Fleischer's Betty Boop.

Now, the classical explanation for hysterical symptoms and neurotic knee-jerk reactions is that the underlying trigger, the *real* reason for them, is unknown to the person plagued by them. It is something so awful, usually inflicted on the victim during early childhood, that it has been relegated to the unconscious where, with the passage of time, it grows more powerful, more able to toy with its trembling host. For years I suffered weird

agonies from completely silly stimuli. Those little horns—the ones drummers with bad senses of humor used to go *whoop whoop* with—would send chills through me. Clowns appalled me, especially ones dressed in white, and a certain kind of dark, foxy girl entering a room made me instantly check all exits and plan reasonable sounding excuses for a quick departure. I did not know the underlying reason for these and other distressful symptoms until I attended a retrospective of ancient cartoon films at some intellectuals' haven and, for the first time since I had been a fat, simple child, I saw her again. *Betty Boop!*

There it was, all of it—the white clown, the *whoop whoop*, and, worst of all, the absolute epitome of the morbid masculine mind's conjuration of the tricky bitch—*Betty Boop!* There she was, scuttling about lightly in her elastic flapper's body, everything Max Fleischer dreaded in the female sex, an awful vision of merciless, unremitting castration. I realized at once, grinding my teeth in the darkness, that she was the creature personally responsible for my not having all sorts of fun with a certain kind of dark, foxy girl. Thanks a lot, Max Fleischer!

With *Snow White*, Disney, always the bearer of Mosaic tablets of law for lesser animators, hit on the idea of noodling away somewhat from the blob-and-spaghetti people by mixing them in with two or three more human-seeming creatures. True, the "humans" were only marginally such—the woblblings of their legs and faces indicated that they were at least part jellyfish—but next to Dopey and Sleepy and Grouchy, Prince Charming almost looked like a flesh-and-blood movie star. Almost. *Snow White* also introduced Disney's decision not only to continue the grand old tradition of scary scenes in animation, but to take the gloves off the horror effects and scare the shit out of the little nippers who formed the bulk of his clientele by pulverizing their innocent minds with witches and vultures and skeletons chained in dungeons. Needless to say, they loved it.

I wish I could say that things

have gotten better since then, but they have not. Disney has gotten better, or at least his enterprises have, and if his Land and World projects are viable hints, as I think they are, in the early 2000s our entire planet and all its satellites, both natural and artificial, will be © Walt Disney Productions. But not his animated features. Not they.

First he gave us *Fantasia*, which proved that the bulk of the critical establishment and all but a tiny fraction of the art-fancying public were buffoons, since they considered the thing an esthetic milestone, but which was intrinsically a disaster. *Dumbo* was kind of cute, I liked the fresh birds and the storm, but a steady downhill trend was in sight. The unions misunderstood and insisted animators needed to be paid a living wage, and from then on it was a matter of shortcuts and dodges to save cash whenever possible. We were introduced to the sudden freezing of a character when movement was not absolutely essential, the dead face with the moving lips, the shadow puppet technique of shoving fixed figures back and forth across the screen, and other such penny-pinching devices—devices which were, unhappily, brought to a fine art by the producers of the Saturday morning animated series shows primarily designed to sell expensive battery-operated toys. These dismal productions are little more than slide shows.

The mood of these Saturday morning specials is very much reflected by *Heavy Metal*, and I more than suspect that, in selling the movie to potential backers, its producers cited the steady weekly exposure of kids to the slam-bang superhero sagas as a great little audience-builder. And I suspect, moreover, judging from the quality of the animation, that they may have hired some of these Saturday morning artists.

The magazine *Heavy Metal* is an interesting publishing venture. It's a spin-off of the recent European vogue of producing elaborately got-up comic books, which, in turn, may have been inspired by the great success of *Tin-Tin* and, later, *Asterix*, the latter enjoying a



"... the absolute epitome of the morbid masculine mind's conjuration of the tricky bitch." The cartoon world's own Boop-Oop-a-Doop Girl, Max Fleischer's Betty Boop, from the man who created Popeye.

general adoration little short of incredible. However, unlike these earlier ventures, most of which are fairly jolly adventure romps, the new books tend strongly to the dark and bizarre, and stress grotesque scenes, violent action, and kinky sex. The influence of the American underground comics is obvious.

The publishers of *Heavy Metal* decided to see if there was a market for the stuff over here. It would be a relatively inexpensive magazine to launch—definitely a *Heavy Incentive*—since it would start out using mostly European art and the publishers would have to pay only reprint rights. They tried it, and it worked. Not sensationally—it hasn't been a dazzling phenomenon of the periodical world—but it's done quite well. I am not one of its regular readers but I am by no means unfamiliar with it, and the art work is consistently interesting: a wide variety of techniques and approaches are represented, some of the strips show an extraordinarily involved style, and there are loads of graphic drawings of Amazonian women doing athletic sex. It's extremely naughty, but since it's also clearly aimed at those among us suffering the first onsets of pubescence, the overall effect is sort of bubble-gum Pop, a kind of touching period piece.

Unfortunately, in spite of what has obviously been an awful lot of work, this odd charm does not translate into the *Heavy Metal* movie. It's touchingly clear that the producers have put much thought into the project and are desperately eager to please. The sound track is



whomped out by such tried and trusted hard rock organizations as Black Sabbath, Blue Oyster Cult, and even a regrouping of a chunk of the old Grand Funk Railroad; the stories have been carefully culled from strips in the back files and include a couple I remember looking pretty good in the original, and the whole business is tied up within a very serious and highly moral connecting story whose essential point is that good does triumph over evil, in spite of what this or that particular episode within the film may have made you think.

It should have worked. I would have thought it *would* have worked, but it didn't, and I think that what happened is that *Heavy Metal* ran into animation—and animation won.

Take one of the most noticeable features of the magazine *Heavy Metal*: its sexy broads. Though they mostly tend to breasts and buttocks of large, rubbery natures, they *do* vary, one from the other, and if you covered their heads with paper bags or whatever, you would still be able to tell them apart, at least in the better-drawn strips; but not so in the movie. In the movie the animators, one and all, seem to have learned their feminine anatomy entirely by studying *Barbi* dolls, and it does not matter what sort of woman they are attempting to depict—pagan empresses, nagging Jewish secretary, the last survivor of a warrior race (*Heavy Metal* has them all); their bodies are the same stiff, identical tribute to that beloved little plastic sweetheart of our times. True, large breasts *have* been added—not without a considerable struggle. I am sure—but they are embarrassed strangers on that pristine *Barbi* chest. Not to worry.

The men vary a little more in body looks, but they all seem to *move* the same, a funny sort of shoulders-front lurching with the arms held half-bent in front of the chest, which makes them all look like they're nervously running out onto a football field. I've absolutely no explanation for this peculiarity.

One thing that *does* now and then work is the background art. Here, every so often, the feel of the original magazine work does come through. And it's saddening, because



"Sitting through them was like watching some solemn heavy-foot botch up a long and complicated joke." In one of *Heavy Metal*'s lighter sequences, a motley crew of extraterrestrials assemble for an outer-space jury trial.

it shows that, of course, the thing could have been done properly.

Whoever it was who drew the huge skeleton the warrior lady flies through on her giant, featherless pigeon (*Heavy Metal* is a very special world) did it right, but the moment stands out uncomfortably in contrast with what comes next or came before. There's another story involving a mean taxi driver with a handy gadget for vaporizing unwanted fares, which takes place in the squalid ruined city that all of us but Mayor Koch believe Manhattan will turn into shortly; it has a couple of good moments, but only here and there, and the result is a kind of esthetic sputter.

The most effective stretch of the film isn't science fiction at all, but the opening section of a story concerning bombers in World War II. The sequence marches along quite briskly, there's nice steady movement from shot to shot, and we have a cohesive flow of action as the bomber gets into more and more trouble. Then, rather awkwardly, it turns into a ghost story; but (and I'm afraid this is typical of the crudity of this movie) the ghosts aren't ghosts at all. At first they appear to be horribly killed aviators brought back to an awful mockery of life, but they turn out to be monsters with claws and fangs and crap like that. There's not a shred of pity for these dead flyers from the animators, nor the slightest feel for the pathos of what's happened to them. Just boogeyman stuff.

One aspect of *Heavy Metal* which is really odd, considering that

it is, after all, a cartoon, is its grisly lack of humor. This isn't all that noticeable in the action sequences, except, possibly, for a tendency to overrely on the word "asshole" to produce hilarity in the viewer, but it shows up all too well in the episodes trying frankly to be funny. They are agonizingly bad in their timing and in almost every other aspect of technique. Sitting through them was like watching some solemn heavy-foot botch up a long and complicated joke. One of these episodes—involving a UFO crewed by boring drug-addicted aliens—got two, count 'em, *two* laughs from a Saturday afternoon audience which was sympathetic and trying very hard to enjoy the movie. The other—involving a supposedly funny rapist/murderer/swindler/etc.—got none, count 'em, none. I don't think I've ever seen an animated movie kid around with less success. I suppose this ineptness might be excused on the grounds that the film was being aimed at eleven-year-olds; but I was watching some eleven-year-olds watching it, and it missed.

I wish the whole picture had been handled better. It could have been a classic of its kind and an inspiration to animators of the future. As it is, the thing is only distasteful. The really unfortunate aspect of it is that, by being unable to convey the magazine's genuine if naive and somewhat crude charm, all that comes through are the magazine's aspects—the juvenile humor, the endless sadomasochism, the silly plots—and you end up with an icky movie. 17

# Frank Belknap Long on Literature, Lovecraft, and the Golden Age of 'Weird Tales'

THE VETERAN FANTASIST REFLECTS ON HIS EXPERIENCE  
AND CONCLUDES THAT LIFE IS "MORE MYSTERIOUS THAN WE KNOW,  
STRANGER AND MORE TERRIFYING."

Interviewer Tom Collins reports:

"Frank Belknap Long has lived through a major part of science fiction history in the United States and helped shape the field when most of us were still in our early teens," says Ray Bradbury.

"Frank Belknap Long is one of science fiction's grand old masters—famous for his dark, somber fantasies and vivid tales of space adventure since the 1930s," says Robert Silverberg.

French critic Jacques Bergier says Long's story "The Hounds of Tindalos" is "probably one of the ten most terrifying and significant short stories in all literature." No less an authority than Robert Bloch has called him "a master of fantasy and horror."

Surrealists have adopted him as one of their mentors; certain practitioners of magic have based spells and ceremonies on his work. Ideas he casually tossed into his stories a quarter-century or more ago turn up today in movies and television shows by people who may have no idea that the territory has already been covered.

Despite scaring the pants off generations of terrified fans, Frank Belknap Long—H.P. Lovecraft's beloved "Belknapius"—is one of the most revered figures in the field of science fiction and supernatural horror. A native New Yorker; born here in 1903, he was an active member of

the amateur press movement in his youth, a movement, now nearly vanished, that was divided almost equally among writing, printing (with handset type), and socializing. It was through the amateur press that he met Howard Phillips Lovecraft, the Providence, Rhode Island, fiction writer, poet, essayist, and correspondent.

Lovecraft admired Long's writing and encouraged him to turn professional. In the years since, many of Long's stories have attained the status of classics in the field. Dashiell Hammett selected one of them for inclusion in *Creeps by Night*, and he has been reprinted in other anthologies, including August Derleth's groundbreaking *Sleep No More*, Alfred Hitchcock's *Stories for Late at Night*, Basil Davenport's *Famous Monster Stories*, and Les Daniels's *Dying of Fright*—fifty hardcover appearances in all. Most recently, his work has been represented in Schiff's *Whispers III*, just released by Doubleday, and in the recent *Arkham House* volume, *New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*.

Long has been honored with membership in the First Fandom Hall of Fame, and is the recipient of the field's most prestigious honor, the World Fantasy Convention's Life Achievement Award. He and Stephen King were co-guests of honor at the fifth World Fantasy Convention, held in Providence in 1979.

His work may be found in several current paperback collections—*Night*

*Fear*, *The Early Long*, and *The Rim of the Unknown*. Novels like *Space Station Number One* and *Mars My Destination* are, unfortunately, out of print, but while such books may seem dated by scientific advances, they are filled with a blazing sense of wonder, an awe at the achievements of man and the glory of the universe, that makes the search for these books worthwhile.

A good introduction to the author himself may be found in *The Early Long*, with its fascinating glimpses into the formative days of sf and fantasy, and in *Arkham House's Dreamer on the Nightside*, the gentle memoir of his friendship with Lovecraft. Best of all, there is a volume of poetry, *In Mayan Splendor*, which is not only charged with wonder, magic, and delight, but remains one of the most physically beautiful volumes *Arkham House* has published since its inception.

**TZ:** Frank, your career stretches back to the days of the legendary pulp magazines like *Weird Tales*. What kind of reaction did *Weird Tales* get when it first appeared on newsstands back in 1923?

**Long:** It startled people, because there had been nothing like it before. It was a magazine entirely devoted to the supernatural horror story, the more or less traditional ghost story, and so forth. I remember seeing the first issue on the stands. It featured a

# Frank Belknap Long

cover story by Anthony Rud called "Ooze," and it didn't surprise me that Lovecraft mentioned it in one of his early letters to me. Of course, he became interested immediately.

Later on, when Lovecraft came to New York and sold five stories to *Weird Tales*, he praised my work so highly to the editor at that time, Edwin Baird, and to J. C. Henneberger, the publisher, that my first story was accepted as a matter of course. It was called "The Desert Lich." The second one, "Death Waters," appeared in December, 1924.

Baird was the first editor to publish MacKinlay Kantor, and in his autobiography Kantor says a great deal about Baird and praises him as a very discerning editor. He probably started a dozen important authors on their careers, just as he did Lovecraft. HPL corresponded with him very extensively, and wrote him several of the most interesting of the letters published in the *Arkham House Collected Letters*. In one of the most famous ones, Lovecraft sounds a very despairing note that reminds me of some of the letters he wrote later on, when he first came to New York.

Another of my stories was accepted by Baird for *Real Detective Tales*, which he also edited, but the magazine folded and the story was never published. Farnsworth Wright took over *Weird Tales* shortly after that and published the four stories of mine that Baird turned over to him. All together, Wright accepted thirty-five of my stories in the ten-year period I wrote for *Weird Tales*, and only rejected three or four at most. He never suggested ideas, never changed a line or a title in all that time.

**TZ:** What did you think of the illustrations in *Weird Tales*?

**Long:** Some of them were excellent. An early artist, Andrew Bronsatch, did a cover illustration of "Death Waters." I remember that Wright sent me a little thumbnail sketch in color, and that, being very young at the time, I was thrilled. When the magazine appeared, I showed it to everyone. It was my first professional sale.

Well, strictly speaking it was the second, but the first one did not get a four-color cover illustration. I was only given one other cover later on, but

some of the interior illustrations were splendid. Bok illustrated a number of my stories, and Finlay did three or four.

I only remember really disliking one illustration, done for "The Horror from the Hills." The story has this incredible entity, Chaugnar Faugn, who looks a little like an elephant, and it was actually depicted as a real elephant standing on a pedestal.

**TZ:** Many of the covers were painted by Margaret Brundage, who was famous for her scantily clad women in distress.

**Long:** Yes. Lovecraft didn't think very highly of Mistress Brundage. He didn't like her nudes—but it did increase circulation. There you have it: fine stories and good illustrations don't increase the circulation, but something very sensational on the cover will boost sales, whether it has artistic merit or not. *Weird Tales* never tried to compete with the sex magazines of the time, though, which were considered to be very audacious—*Spicy Stories* and magazines like that. Both Robert E. Howard and E. Hoffmann Price wrote for several of them. I think a quarter of a cent a word was all they ever paid.

*Weird Tales* had several levels of readership. Some of the young readers who were published in "The Eyrie" [the letter column] were naive indeed, but a much more mature audience read WT as well, even in those days. Now, of course, copies are collected by university libraries.

**TZ:** We talked a little about Edwin Baird. What can you recall of J. C. Henneberger?

**Long:** His chief claim to fame was the founding of *College Humor*. I think at one time he dreamed of becoming a very important popular journalist, perhaps on the level of Hearst. He had very big plans, I remember, when he came to New York. Lovecraft brought him to our home once as a dinner guest, and Bernarr McFadden's name came up. "I don't really envy McFadden his fame," Henneberger said, "because it came from cheap journalism, and I like to think of myself as a little above that."

Actually, Henneberger was just as much of a go-getter as McFadden, but you'd never think it because he was so quiet-spoken. He was in his

forties at the time—this must have been about 1923, because it was before I sold my first story to *Weird Tales*—and he was very ambitious, a shrewd businessman. But he was also very cultivated and read a great deal.

Henneberger had come from Chicago to New York on that occasion to raise money for his whole publishing group. That was when he tried to make Lovecraft editor. He had tremendous admiration and respect for Howard, and would have made him editor, but Howard wouldn't go to Chicago. He said the very thought of the slaughterhouses was too much for him.

**TZ:** He could have commuted, of course.

**Long:** And I told him that many times. That's what Sonia must have told him also, because she would have liked him to take the job. She was very concerned about his inability to find one in New York.

**TZ:** Of course, you knew Lovecraft and Sonia Greene before and after they were married. Tell us a little about their relationship. How did they meet?

**Long:** I'm sure Howard was very impressed by Sonia. It was almost a love affair, insofar as he was capable of a romantic attachment. She met him through their shared amateur journalism interests, at a convention in Boston. She invited him to visit her in New England, and he did so two or three times. Then he was a guest at her home on his first trip to New York. There was nothing physically romantic between them at that time, I'm sure of that. When they stayed at a town on the seacoast together, they had separate rooms, and so forth.

**TZ:** You met Lovecraft through correspondence, didn't you?

**Long:** Yes. I received what I suppose could be called a fan letter from Howard—if you keep in mind that praise from a master to a beginner sometimes sounds that way. He was tremendously impressed by a Poe-esque kind of short story that I wrote for *The United Amateur*. It was titled "The Eye Above the Mantel." I just found a copy a few weeks ago, and considering that I must have been about eighteen when I wrote it, I don't think it's too bad. It was a story in poetic prose, heavily influenced by Poe's "The Shadow" and

some of his other "fables," as Poe called them. In fact, I don't know that I could do that kind of thing much better today.

Over the years, Lovecraft continued to encourage me. Not only did we meet often in person, but he must have written eight hundred to a thousand letters to me across the years.

**TZ:** Many different writers have tried to describe Lovecraft, but you knew him perhaps better than anyone. What was he really like?

**Long:** He was a very kindly disposed, generous-minded human being who was also a writer of creative genius.

One thing I would like to do is to point out two fallacies that have appeared in recent biographies. One is that he was a schizoid. There was nothing schizoid about Howard. He met on an equal plane with all kinds of people. He was absolutely at ease in company. He enjoyed talking with people. A schizoid is supposed to be cold, unemotional, almost totally detached. Howard was not as emotional as a great many people, but I can't imagine any psychological classification less typical of him. Unfortunately, you see, if you don't know a person, if you've never met him, you can't judge him by his writings alone.

The other thing is that two or three writers assume that Howard was a very hard man to deal with, very firm in his opinions and always attempting to force them on others. Nothing could be further from the truth! Howard could be easily persuaded to change his mind, and he never insisted that other people agree with him. In a recent interview, Manly Wade Wellman said he always wanted to get in touch with Lovecraft but had never done so because he was afraid Howard would have been too dogmatic and attempt to "lay down the law," so to speak, in discussing literary and other matters. Actually, that whole attitude was entirely absent from Howard's character.

Another characteristic of Howard that perhaps I should mention is that he was very slow to anger. He never flew into furious rages. If someone said something that angered him, or made a thinly veiled verbal attack on him, his voice could turn harsh and cold, and he could give one the feeling that it might be very dangerous



*"What interests me most is the psychological factor, combined with beauty and mystery . . . Even in the most terrible horror story there can be elements of strange beauty."*

to risk gambling on his capacity for restraint.

I didn't put all this in *Dreamer on the Nightside* because you can't include everything. But it's really tragic how these distortions of what a great man is really like creep in years after he dies. Anatole France said in "Little Pierre" that he never wanted to be famous because your biographers would slander you beyond belief. And it's true in the case of Lovecraft. His emotional character has been absolutely missed in most of the commentaries. He had a great gift of friendship, and those who didn't know him personally miss all that.

**TZ:** I seem to recall a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art that you two made together.

**Long:** You mean the time we visited the Egyptian tomb? Well, the Metropolitan apparently still has it.

This was way back in the 1920s. The tomb was on the main floor in the Hall of Egyptian Antiquities, and we both went inside to the inner burial chamber. Howard was fascinated by the somberness of the whole thing. He put his hand against the corrugated stone wall, just casually, and the next day he developed a pronounced but not too serious inflammation. There was no great pain involved, and the swelling went down in two or three days. But it seems as if some malign, supernatural influence still lingered in the burial chamber—The Curse of the Pharaohs—as if they resented the fact that Howard had entered this tomb and touched the wall. Perhaps they had singled him out because of his stories and feared he was getting too close to the Ancient Mysteries.

**TZ:** Lovecraft was famous for taking long walks, not only around Pro-

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vidence, but in New York, too—some of them lasting all night. Did you go on any of these?

**Long:** I was a young student at New York University, and I didn't have a chance to go on more than a fourth or a fifth of them. Samuel Loveman, Reinhart Kleiner, George Kirk, and two or three others accompanied him more often. They'd start out in Brooklyn and they'd wind up at the

felt he must get back to Providence. He did become, in his last few months in New York, terribly neurotic, and he saw horrible creatures everywhere—though not, I'm sure, in a hallucinatory sense. Nevertheless, he lost weight and he looked terrible. My mother thought he was on the verge of a disastrous nervous breakdown and wrote a long letter to his aunts saying she thought

for about ten years. I started with the group that included *The Saint* and, after a couple of years there, moved on to Renown Publications and *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine*.

We had many visits from well-known mystery writers at both magazines. You'd be amazed how many established writers were eager to appear in them. But we'd get some very bad stories from some of the foremost writers in the field. It was something of a revelation to me.

For a number of years, free-lance writing was my sole means of support, but it does not always supply the kind of income one needs. I've been a free-lance writer most of my life, but I enjoyed working for Renown Publications, too. I took all of the work home and edited it over the weekend. And I also worked, later on, for *Short Stories*—a revival of a famous early pulp magazine that was on the order of *Adventure*—and for another Renown publication, *Satellite Science Fiction*. In all, I've been associate editor of three different magazines.

**TZ:** Do you ever long for a return of those old magazines?

**Long:** No, not really. In the main their literary standards were not very high, and at their best they were miles below the standards set by magazines like *Harpers* and *Scribners*. I've always thought that serious literary standards cannot just be brushed aside. The tragedy of it is that, years ago, the so-called quality magazines published weird stories only very occasionally, so a writer had no choice but to write for the pulps. That's changed today: weird fiction is appearing in the quality magazines quite frequently.

**TZ:** Do you suppose that writers like Poe and Bierce, if they'd lived in the 1920s and 1930s, would have written for magazines like *Weird Tales*?

**Long:** You can't project something like that. You can't imagine Poe walking along the street and finding the magazine so absorbing that he'd immediately sit down and write for it—but I think it would have appealed to him and Bierce. Although Poe was a major American literary figure—and there is a certain irony involved here—during his lifetime he wrote for a number of magazines that were a degree more pulpish than *Weird Tales* and a dozen others I could

## **"Howard liked to pretend there were secret passages beneath all unusual buildings, passages filled with monsters and decaying creatures."**

tip of Manhattan, or even at the northern extremity of the island. They'd take the subway, of course, to get from Brooklyn to Manhattan. They'd start off in Brooklyn Heights and heaven knows where dawn would find them.

Howard liked anything from the eighteenth century and even the early years of the nineteenth century, when that colonial influence still survived. I remember walking on Forty-Second Street with him once, and he pointed to the American Radiator Building that towered close to the New York Public Library on Fortieth Street as an example of futuristic modern architecture. It also had a kind of Dunsonian, dreamlike quality with its black and gold rising against the sky. Howard imagined secret passages under it, as he did for all the buildings he liked. He liked to pretend there were secret passages beneath all unusual buildings. You see it in his stories, too, the old churches of Providence and so forth. He'd say that the passages were filled with monsters and decaying creatures, Innsmouth-type entities.

When he first came to New York, Howard was totally fascinated by the city and by all its historical aspects. There was much that he later thought was terrible, but nothing grated on him at all in the first two or three months. Gradually, though, when he couldn't find a good position and Sonia kept after him, he moved to the Red Hook section of Brooklyn and saw the terrible decadence. His whole attitude changed after that. He

it might be better if he went back to his beloved Providence. So return home he did.

**TZ:** What is your favorite story of his?

**Long:** From a purely artistic point of view, I think my favorite is "The Colour Out of Space." And after that, "The Dunwich Horror" and "At the Mountains of Madness." I'm not quite sure how high on the list he would have placed "The Dunwich Horror" himself. His evaluation of that story changed from time to time.

**TZ:** We were talking earlier about your own contributions to *Weird Tales*. That wasn't the only magazine you sold to in those days, was it?

**Long:** Oh, no. At the so-called height of the pulp era, I wrote for perhaps a dozen magazines over a period of several years. There were at least thirty-five science fiction magazines on the stands every month. I sold two such stories to the Gernsback group [owned by sf pioneer Hugo Gernsback, for whom the "Hugo" Award is named] around 1927. The first, "The Thought Machine," appeared in *Wonder* magazine—accompanied by a pencil sketch that did not in the least resemble me! Immediately afterward, Gernsback sold the magazine to another group. I haven't read those stories in years, but a fan resurrected them a while ago and said he liked them very much.

**TZ:** Didn't you work for some of these magazines later on as an editor?

**Long:** Yes, I worked for Leo Margulies, beginning in 1951 or 1952,

name. Look at his parody of *Blackwood's*. They were very crude. Poe wrote for a number of magazines that were distinctly immature from a modern point of view. But he remains a major literary figure despite all of that.

**TZ:** Of course, things have changed somewhat since then, but I wonder if the pressure on writers isn't still pretty much the same.

**Long:** It's true. A brilliant young writer today can achieve overwhelming overnight success, while another who might be just as accomplished can almost starve to death. Young writers can still go through a terrible economic struggle. A bestselling paperback may fetch a third of a million dollars, but that is only advantageous to about one writer in a hundred, young or old. Leslie Fiedler made me very mad recently with an article in the *New York Times Book Review* claiming that American writers of genius no longer had an economic struggle, but were guaranteed a fortune in advance!

**TZ:** I think it's amazing that people survived as writers on the low rates once paid for pulp fiction. They must have written an enormous volume of words.

**Long:** Yes, in the past there were tremendous "pulp giants," as they called themselves. Arthur Burks, for example, often made \$10,000 in one year. Raise no eyebrows, please. That would be \$70,000 to \$80,000 today, and a tremendous salary for someone who was writing for not more than two or, occasionally, three cents a word.

There used to be, at the Somerset Restaurant in Manhattan, a gathering of the major pulp writers over which Burks presided. Ron Hubbard [L. Ron Hubbard, today best known as the founder of Scientology] was an early member of the group. I remember he used to wear his Navy uniform to meetings. I brought Lovecraft to a meeting once, and he was quite impressed with Hubbard, asking, "Who is that red-headed young gentleman over there?"

I knew Cornell Woolrich quite well, too. We met in 1957 when Leo and Sylvia Margulies invited me to a party at which he was present. I got to know him fairly well in the next couple of years, and sometimes stopped by at his hotel on West



Long recalls his friendship with Lovecraft (above) in *Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Dreamer on the Nightside*. Both men wrote for *Weird Tales* and other pulp magazines of the 1920s and '30s.

Seventy-First Street for a chat. "William Irish" was the pen name he used for his most famous story, "The Phantom Lady." He was a most remarkable writer, very shy and unassertive in many ways. After his mother died he went all to pieces. When you met him at that time, you couldn't believe he was the same man who had written *Deadline at Dawn* and Hitchcock's *Rear Window*. He once told me he'd never seen *Rear Window*.

Somehow, I never could reconcile the difference between Woolrich and his writing, and others who knew him at the time have said the same thing. This open, honest, sort of naive individual was so different from the writer of genius who had produced those stories that I have sometimes thought that his mother, to whom he was so attached, perhaps contributed something to those early stories. He appears with her on the dust jacket of two of his books, and she was apparently a very brilliant woman. I've often wondered if she didn't perhaps write some of the stories, at least in part. But that's wholly a surmise.

I remember he was very upset once that Hans Santesson had told him to leave a meeting of the Mystery Writers of America for drinking too much. A fellow writer had to guide him home. And when he died he left a fortune of close to a million dollars, which he bequeathed to Columbia University. Yet he always talked as if he were hard up and afraid he wouldn't sell his next story.

**TZ:** For most writers, though, the struggle to make ends meet is a real one, as you pointed out before. But

for fantasy writers, things may at last be looking up. Don't you find that the fantasy genre has gained acceptance as an important branch of mainstream literature in the last few years?

**Long:** I think genuine literature in any category has always been in the mainstream. Supernatural horror stories, the lighter kinds of fantasy, science fiction—the best of it—all these have always been in the mainstream. Dickens wrote an entire novel that was specter-haunted from the first page to its still-unfinished final chapters, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Wilkie Collins and Emily Brontë also come instantly to mind. If you go back a century or more, you find that the whole tradition of American and English literature has assigned to fantasy a very high role. In America alone, Poe and Hawthorne were predominantly supernatural horror story writers, even though the latter had other strings to his bow. And there is a wholly magical fantasy aspect of *Moby Dick*—and even of *Huckleberry Finn*—that would diminish their splendor if removed.

**TZ:** What do you consider to be the most important elements of a horror story?

**Long:** Many elements are of the utmost importance. The feeling that everything is not quite as it should be, even when two young people are playing tennis on a summer afternoon—if that feeling can be conveyed at the start, you'll have scored at least two out of seven or eight points. The swift or slow buildup—there are advantages in both—of a truly terrifying atmosphere can take on a special quality when it's combined with first-rate characterization.

Horror for me is almost inseparable from profound psychological stress. Someone is in a terrible spot because he's done something something dreadful in a "beyond the pale" sense, or he possesses extraordinary endowments of one sort or another. What penalty will he have to pay? What will happen to him under various unusual circumstances—often of a totally destructive nature, and not just on a physical plane?

Emotional fidelity is very important. What interests me the most is the psychological factor, combined with beauty and mystery and



*"Supernatural horror stories, the lighter kinds of fantasy, science fiction—the best of it—all these have always been in the mainstream ... There is a wholly magical fantasy aspect of Moby Dick, and even of Huckleberry Finn, that would diminish their splendor if removed."*

strangeness. Even in the most terrible horror story there can be elements of strange beauty. Rod Serling was brilliantly perceptive in his handling of that aspect of the genre.

**TZ:** Do you find those same elements in stories being written today?

**Long:** Oh, yes. Many present-day writers have greater maturity, greater insight than the horror writers of the 1920s or 1930s. I think every powerful new writer who has come along has contributed something new and important. Stephen King, for example, has taken ordinary situations, situations that confront young people in, let us say, the average American village, and has dwelt in a totally naturalistic way on how they act and react. He has made all of this so realistic that when he introduces an element of supernatural horror, you wholly believe it.

Peter Straub is another new and

exceptionally gifted practitioner of the genre. He has a genius for conjuring up an unutterably chilling atmosphere.

What Lovecraft contributed was primarily a unique kind of "cosmicism," the sense of terrible alien entities encroaching on mankind from outer space. King, on the other hand, has taken the average village, such as his own town in Maine, or one in the Midwest, and has introduced the supernatural elements in close association with everyday events in the lives of his characters.

**TZ:** King has also added sexual candor to the genre. Do you think that is out of place in a supernatural horror story?

**Long:** I don't think very candid sex should be introduced just to make a story more popular. But if you believe, as I do, that sex is central to life's deepest meaning, its inclusion in

many different genres is certainly legitimate.

**TZ:** What is the source of your inspiration?

**Long:** It's hard to say what first aroused my interest in that direction. From a quite early age, ten or twelve or so, I became interested in science fiction novels. In those days they were called "pseudo-science stories." I wrote some science fiction at eighteen or so, and it had a lot to do with my childhood influences and my early family environment and all the circumstances of my early life, which is true of almost all writers. In my youth I read a great deal of Wells and Verne, and also adventure and sea stories by Kipling, Conrad, and others.

**TZ:** What about horror movies?

**Long:** Across the years I have probably attended about as many as the average person, if not more. Largely because it fascinates me from a literary point of view, I've always felt that the supernatural horror film is a genre apart. In my early days I was interested in the Boris Karloff movies, some of which go back to silent film days. In the last few years I've viewed only the outstanding productions, because I've been so busy otherwise.

**TZ:** No midnight visits to graveyards?

**Long:** No, no, no! I never had any tendency to actually visit cemeteries. I differed from HPL a great deal in that respect. Graveyards have never actually fascinated me. As a matter of fact, they more or less depress me. I've always avoided them as much as possible.

**TZ:** Then what is the source of horror in your stories?

**Long:** The primary source of horror is the simple fact that life is more mysterious than we know, stranger and more terrifying. There are depths of human experience ... and to some extent, of course, the horror story can be a trivialization of that experience. I have no great admiration, say, for the story that actually tries to make you feel that the conventional devil is a reality.

**TZ:** You don't believe in the devil?

**Long:** No, I'm afraid I don't.

**TZ:** So what do you believe in as an evil force?

**Long:** It's very difficult to judge that. You see, I'm convinced that something very vicious and terrible un-

doubtedly does exist. But beyond that, we can only speculate as to its precise nature. It may well be a wholly anthropological development, with no psychic or occult implications at all.

**TZ:** When you sit down to write a story, where do you find that evil? In crowded cities? Old dark houses? Graveyards?

**Long:** It depends on what sort of story you're writing. If you're writing one with a traditional "House of Usher" background and you want to bring that out, you write a different sort of story than when you're confronting an encroachment from out of time in a hideous, sanity-imperiling way—the Lovecraft sort of thing. If you want to make the reader aware of the strangeness and beauty and mystery of the ancient world—the revival of some ancient myth, for instance—you use a still different approach. In the same way, there's no

particular group of people I prefer to see menaced or frightened. An idea grips me, and it can happen to almost anyone.

**TZ:** Do you prefer to write short stories or novels?

**Long:** I've written more novels than short stories in the last fifteen years or so. I find that more satisfying, in a way. It's also less of a strain. If you write one short story and sell it, you have to worry about the next sale, with no time lag in between.

**TZ:** Have any of your stories been filmed or televised?

**Long:** None have been filmed, though that could still happen, but several have been on radio and television. My "Guest in the House"—not to be confused with the famous play of that name—was televised on *The Outer Limits*. Theodore Sturgeon had a lot to do with that. He liked the story very much and was extremely influential at ABC at the time. Another

story, "The Black Druid," was also televised.

**TZ:** What have you been writing lately?

**Long:** I've gone back to short story writing for a spell, but I've also been working on a novel for the last year and a half, a new science fantasy novel. And I've written a lot of science fiction in the last two decades—chiefly novels.

**TZ:** It's interesting that so much of your work is still in print, or back in print, after so many years.

**Long:** Yes, many of my best stories are currently in print. The recent Zebra collection, *Night Fear*, contains a number of stories from the old magazines, but the title comes from a story I wrote only a few years ago. Some of my best work, including both fantasy and horror, is in that book. My Doubleday collection, *The Early Long*, is now in print from Jove, and another paperback collection will soon be forthcoming from Berkley Books. *The Rim of the Unknown* is also in paperback. All three of these volumes appeared about two years ago, and between them contain perhaps three-quarters of my best short story writing. *The Early Long* also contains a considerable amount of autobiographical material, since I wrote an introduction to each story. Of course, my three most recent Arkham House books are still in print, too. The first edition of *The Rim of the Unknown* is available from Arkham House. So are my memoir of Lovecraft, *Dreamer on the Nightside*, and *In Mayan Splendor*, a poetry collection. The last two have never appeared in paperback.

**TZ:** *In Mayan Splendor* has some of your best work in it. Since most of our readers have probably not seen the book, perhaps we could close with something from it—a charming little poem called "Prediction" that, in a mere eight lines, expresses many of your feelings about life:

*I do not think that I shall see  
The moon, nor any linden tree,  
Nor flaming orchards in the dawn  
But that I'll know they're made for  
me.*

*And I shall hold my goblet up  
And drink the dizzy wine of kings,  
And seek cool cheeks, and tingling  
song  
And all the gorgeous, golden  
things.* 17

Jacket design by Stephen E. Fabian for *In Mayan Splendor*, a recently published collection of Long's early poetry.



## IN MAYAN SPLENDOR



FRANK BELERAP LONG





# Influencing the Hell Out of Time and Teresa Golowitz

by Parke Godwin

HE WAS A MOST UNLIKELY HERO: A HORNY YOUNG MAN  
WITH AN OLD MAN'S SOUL AND THE DEVIL FOR A SIDEKICK!

**T**he first conscious shock after the coronary was staring down at my own body huddled on the floor by the piano. The next was the fiftyish, harmless-looking, and total stranger helping himself to my liquor. His cordial smile matched the Brooks Brothers tailoring. An urbane Cecil Kellaway toasting me with my own scotch.

"Cheers, Mr. Bluestone. Hope you don't mind."

I found what passed for a voice. "The hell I don't. Who are you, and—and what's happened to me?"

For all the portly bulk of obvious good living, he moved lightly, settling in a Danish modern chair to sip at his purloined drink. "Glenmorangie single malt—one doesn't find much of it in the States. One: my friends call me 'the Prince.' Two: you've just had your second and final heart attack."

Right so far: my first was two seasons back, just after finishing the score for *Huey*.

"You've made the big league." The alleged Prince gestured with his drink at my inert form; rich gold links gleamed against snowy cuffs. "No more diets, no more pills, backers' auditions, or critics. You've crossed over."

I goggled at my corpulent residue. "Dead?"

"As Tutankhamen."

At first blush, there didn't seem much change. My penthouse living room, the East River, Roosevelt Island framed in the picture window with late winter sun. My score on the piano with Ernie Hammil's new lyrics. My wife Sarah's overpriced and underdesigned furniture. Even the records I was listening to after lunch: Pete Rugolo and Stan Kenton, discs on the turntable, jackets on the shelf. For difference—me, very dead at the worst time.

"It couldn't wait? We open in two weeks, the second act needs three new songs, and God gives me this for *tsouris*?" I collapsed on the piano bench as my mind did a double take. "Wait a minute. Prince of what?"

His smile was too benign for the answer. "Darkness—or light, it depends on the translation. We do get deplorable press."

I took his point, not very reassured. "I'm not ... under arrest or something?"

"Of course not." He seemed to regard the question as gauche.

"Will anyone come?"

"Why should they?"

"Well, what do I do? Where do I go?"

The Prince opened his arms to infinite possibilities. "Where would you like to go? Before you answer hastily—" He sipped his scotch, sighing in savory judgment. "Oh, that is good. You see, you've cut your spiritual teeth on misconceptions. Good, bad, I'm in heaven, it's pure hell, all of which rather beg the distinction. We're familiarly known as Topsis and Below Stairs."

"Below Stairs." I swallowed. "That's hell?"

"Eternity is an attitude. Some say it looks like Queens. You have free choice, Mr. Bluestone, bounded only by imagination and your own will to create—and that, for far too many, is living hell. For you: *carte blanche* to the past, present, or future. Though I did have some small personal motive in dropping by."

"I thought so."

"Nonono. Not a collection but a request. We adore your music Below Stairs. Now that you're eligible, we hoped you'd visit for as long as you like. We've quite an art colony, hordes of theater folk. Wilksey Booth would like to do a musical, and this very night there's a grand party at Petronius's house."

Adventure was not my long suit. "Thanks just the same. I'll stay here."

The Prince pursed his lips and frowned. "You never liked unpleasant scenes. You won't be found until Sarah gets back from Miami, and by then not even the air conditioning will help. There's going to be some abysmal *grand guignol* with the mortuary men, a rubber bag, and your wife weeping buckets into a handkerchief."

Not likely. Sarah bought them at Bergdorf's, Belgian lace. For me she'd use Kleenex—the story of our marriage. We never even had children. Sarah was a real princess. Her only bedtime activities were fighting and headaches. For grief, she'd be spritzing the place with Air-Wick before they got the rubber bagful of me down the elevator. On the other hand, my last will and testament might get a



# Influencing Teresa Golowitz

Bergdorf's hanky. The Actors Fund would see a windfall. Sarah wouldn't.

The Prince nudged delicately at the elbow of my thoughts. "Pensive, Mr. Blaustein? It was Blaustein once."

"Not for thirty-five years. Didn't look good on a marquee."

"No fibbing."

"Okay. Four years in an upper-class Washington high school. I used to dream I was a tall blond Wasp. On bad days even an Arab."

Memories and reasons dissolved to another dusty but undimmed image. My Holy of Holies. Mary Ellen Cosgrove, super-shiksa.

Wheat-blond hair brushed thick and shining in a long pageboy, good legs, tight little boobs succinctly defined by an expensive sweater, sorority pin bobbling provocatively over the left one like Fay Wray hanging from the Empire State Building. I think my eyes really went from following the undulations of her tush. She was my first lust, aridly unrequited, but I played the piano well enough to be invited to all her Lambda Pi parties, Oscar Levant among the Goldwyn Girls with weak, horn-rimmed eyes, pimples, and factory-reject teeth. Not much hope against jocks like Bob Bolling, who was born in a toothpaste ad.

But I could dream; beside me, Portnoy was a eunuch. My lust burned eternal in the secrecy of my bedroom as, near nightly, I plowed a fistful of ready, willing, and totally unliberated Mary Ellen Cosgrove and panted to my pillow. *Why don't you love me?*

*Because you're a nebbish*, my pillow said.

The Prince apparently read the thought; his response was tinged with sympathy. "Yes. Mary Ellen."

"It's been forty years. I don't even know if she's still alive."

"More or less."

I was surprised to find how important it was. Past, present, or future, the man said. Why not?

The Prince's brows lifted in elegant question. "A decision?"

"You won't believe this."

"Try me, I'm jaded."

"I want to *shtup* Mary Ellen Cosgrove."

His urbane tolerance palled to disappointment. "That's all?"

"I've missed a lot of things in life. She was the first, we'll start there."

"My talented friend: *Faust*, for all its endurance, is pure propaganda. I should have thought, at the very least, an introduction to Mozart or Bach—"

"Look, for bar mitzvah I got ten bucks and a pen that leaked on white shirts. Now I'm dead. For door prize you want me to klatch with harpsichord

players? Later with the music. I want to ball Mary Ellen Cosgrove."

The Prince regarded me with cosmic weariness, steeping manicured fingertips under his chin. "I wonder. If memory serves, you last saw this Nordic nymphet in graduation week, 1945."

The growing eagerness made me tremble. "What happened to her?"

"You really want to know?"

"Maybe she's not a big deal after forty years, bubby. But she was the first. That's entitled."

"Let me think." The Prince leaned back, concentrating. "Cosgrove ... From high school she wafted to a correct junior college, married a correct young man with a correctly Promising Future. Bob Bolling."

"I knew it! That horny bastard just wanted to score. Not just her, anybody."

"A fact Mr. Bolling belatedly appreciates; at eighteen he considered himself in love when he only needed to go to the bathroom. He spends less time on his libido now than his gall bladder. Nevertheless, for his better days there is a pliant secretary who understands on cue. Mary Ellen has been relatively faithful."

"Relatively?"

The Prince's hands arced in graceful deprecation. "The usual. First affair at forty when her children were grown and no one seemed to need her anymore. An aftermath of delicious guilt followed by anticlimax when no one found out, and one expensive face lift. The last liaison, predictably, just after her younger daughter's wedding. 'Relatively,' I say. She doesn't care that much now. Ennui is always safer than principles; it locks from the inside. Currently into est, vodka, vague malaise about the passage of time and what she imperfectly recalls as her 'golden, best years.' There are millions like her, Mr. Bluestone, perhaps billions. She never found much in herself beyond what men expected of her. For such people youth ought to be bright. It's their end."

His voice, cultivated with overtones of Harvard and Westminster, carried all the ineffable sadness of being alive, growing up, growing older. But I knew what I wanted.

"Not Mary Ellen now, but *then*. A night in October, 1944, the start of our senior year. There was a party at her house."

The Prince's eyes flickered with new interest. "Oh, yes. A fateful evening."

"I kissed her. The first and only time."

Memories like that stay with you. Somehow she was in my arms, fabulous boobs and all, Fay Wray enfolded by Kong Blaustein, and all futures were possible. But I retreated into embarrassment; in the middle of paradise, I thought of my bad teeth and wondered if she noticed. "I blew it."

Sixteen feels so different  
from fifty-five.

A well of  
nervous energy, health,  
and fluttering insecurity  
based on the hard certainty  
that you're the homeliest,  
most unworthy and unwanted,  
least redeemable *schlemiel*  
in the universe.  
God may love you,  
but girls don't.

---

"By an odd coincidence, the merest chance," the Prince said, "Teresa Golowitz was there that night."

"Who?"

"You don't remember her? Nobody does. Sad child, always faded into the wallpaper. Won't you say hello for me?"

Golowitz ... No, not a clue for memory. Old acquaintance was definitely forgot. She would have paled under the beacon of Mary Ellen, in any case. "Will I be able to make it with her, change the way things happened?"

"I certainly hope so," the Prince purred, rising and making for the whiskey again. "If not change, a definite influence."

"Then I'm going to influence the hell out of her."

"I'm counting on it, Mr. Bluestone." For an instant I sensed more in his eyes than weary omniscience. "Remember, you'll be sixteen years old with fifty-odd years of experience. That's not a blessing. Perhaps you can make it one."

Already in a fever to depart, I stopped, agonized by a detail. "I don't remember the exact date."

The Prince flourished like a banner headline. "October 3, 1944! Paris liberated! Allied armies roll across France! Binky Blaustein encircles *la belle* Cosgrove! Why not take the bus for old time's sake?"

"It'll be packed."

"Weren't they all then?" He raised the refilled glass to me. "Good hunting, Binky. And say hello to Teresa."

Again with Golowitz, when my soaring purpose strained at the bit. "Who the hell is—?"

But the Prince, the room, and the year were gone.

Sixteen feels so different from fifty-five. An unsettling mix of fear and intoxication. A well of nervous energy, health, and fluttering insecurity based on the hard certainty that you're the homeliest, most unworthy and unwanted, least redeemable *schlemiel* in the universe. God may love you but girls don't, and life is measured to that painful priority.

Even after forty years I knew the route in my sleep. From my father's jewelry store down Fourteenth Street to Eleventh and E. Catch the Walker Chapel bus through Georgetown over Key Bridge into Virginia, up Lee Highway to Cherrydale and Mary Ellen's house on Military Road.

The bus pulled out at seven-ten; I'd be there at seven forty-five. Just a little more than half an hour! Dropping my real-silver Columbia dime into the paybox, I quivered despite the double exposure of age/youth, glowing with the joyful pain that always churned my blood whenever I was going to see her. It was beginning, would be as it was *then* before time turned into nostalgia and faded both of us into what passed for maturity.

The ancient bus was wartime-jammed with tired government workers and young soldiers in olive drab with shoulder patches no one remembers now: ASTP, Washington Command, the Wolverine Division, 7th Expeditionary Force. Baby-faced sailors with fruit salad on their winter blues, patient and stoic Negroes in the still-Jim-Crowded back seats. Two working housewives from the Government Printing Office in upswept hairdos and square-shouldered jackets, bitching about their supervisors and the outlandish price of beef: you wouldn't need ration stamps soon, but *sixty* cents a pound, who could pay that? Bad enough you couldn't get cigarettes now even if you ran a drug store.

The bus lumbered up the spottily repaired blacktop of Lee Highway toward Cherrydale. Grimy windows and the outside dark made a passable mirror to show me Richard Blaustein—Binky—in his rumpled reversible box-coat from Woodward & Lothrop. Bushy brown hair neither efficiently combed nor recently cut, unformed mouth and chin still blurred with baby fat. Not Caliban, not even homely; merely embryonic. I winked at him from forty years of forgiveness. *Hey, kid, I fixed the teeth.*

Next to me in the crowded aisle, two sailors compared the sultry charms of Veronica Lake with an upstart pinup newcomer named Bacall. I felt dizzy, godlike. It's October, 1944. Veronica Lake is box office in four starring Paramount vehicles, besides spawning the peekaboo hairstyle that gave eyestrain to a million American girls. *To Have and Have Not* isn't released yet. I might be smoking my hoarded Pinehursts with three fingers along the

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butt like Bogart, but Lauren Bacall is just a lanky new whosis named Betty Perske.

I looked closer at my mirror-Binky. The liquid brown eyes behind the glasses were not completely naive even then, wary-humorous with an ancient wisdom not yet renamed Murphy's Law. What can go wrong will, but—a little patience, a little hope. In four years we'll raise our own flag over Jerusalem; for the blacks in the rear of the bus, it'll be longer. Veronica Lake was a waitress before she died. Bacall opened her second Broadway show in 1981. They were both nice girls, but Perske and me, we lasted. Don't ask: there are survivors and others.

Cherrydale. I pulled the buzzer cord and wormed through the press toward the rear door as the bus slowed. It rattled open with a wheeze of fatigued hydraulics, then I was out of the smell of sweat, stale perfume, wool, and monoxide, standing on the corner of Military Road under clear October stars.

"Oh, it's you. Come in."

Mary Ellen stood in the open door, one slender hand on the knob, backed by music and chatter. My Grail, the Ark of my libido's own Covenant—and yet different, a subtle gap between my memory and the fact of her.

"Melly?"

"Well, don't stare at me. Come in, hang up your coat. *Bo-uh!*" And she was off paging Bob Bolling. I hung my coat in the familiar closet and stepped into the large living room. Smaller than I remembered it. Gracious, comfortable chairs and sofa, French doors at the rear leading to the yard, Mason & Hamlin grand piano in the far corner. Boys in trousers that seemed baggy and ill-cut to me, girls in pleated skirts and bobby sox. And faces I recalled with a pang: Bill Tait, Frankie Maguerra. And willowy Laura Schuppe, always inches taller than her escorts.

"It's old Blaustein!"

And of course, Bob Bolling with his unwrinkled Arrow collar and hair that stayed combed. He steered around two girls cating to a record of Tommy Dorsey's "Boogie Woogie," stroking one on the hips—"Shake it but don't break it"—to tower over me with an intimidating sunburst of thirty-two straight teeth.

"Big night, Blaustein," he confided. "Melly's folks are away and I brought some grade-A hooch. Bourbon, Blaustein." He always pronounced it *steen* despite my repeated corrections. He patted me on the cowlick. "If you got a note from your mother, I might put some in your Coke. Heh-heh. Come in the kitchen." He disappeared through the hall arch.

"Skip the bourbon." The unsolicited advice came from an owlish, bespectacled boy curled in a

chair with a thick book. "It's a gift from Mrs. Bolling's third cousin, a distant relative in the process of retreating even further. Try the scotch."

I edged over to him. A great disguise, but there was no hiding those velvet overtones. "Prince?"

"Even he." He turned a page and giggled. "I love *Paradise Lost*. Milton gave me such marvelous lines. The scotch is under the sink."

The record ended; couples shuffled about, awkward, faced with the need for conversation until the music started again. Bill Tait bummed one of my Pinehursts, and I took the first puff. They tasted awful, but you couldn't find real butts anywhere. I segued to the kitchen in time to hear Mary Ellen, coy, sibilant, and not really angry:

"Bob, now *quit* that! Honest, you're all hands tonight. Grab, grab."

When they saw me, I felt only a phantom of jealousy. "Scuse me. Thought I'd get a drink or something."

"Sure, Binky." Mary Ellen switched her pert tush to the icebox. "Coke or Pepsi? Bink, what are you staring at? Coke or Pepsi?"

"Scotch, please."

She made a face at me, strained patience. "You don't drink. Stop putting on."

Bob whinnied. "Little man had a ha-a-rd day!"

"You wouldn't believe—the death of me."

"Mama and Daddy don't even drink scotch."

"Under the sink."

"See, smarty?" Mary Ellen yanked open the cabinet door. *Voilà*: Glenmorangie, the bottle collared with a small handwritten tag: *Against mixed blessings*.

"I never saw that." She shrugged. "Anyway, aspirin and Coke are your speed."

The bottle looked like an oasis. "Ice?"

"Sure, it's your funeral. Just don't get sick on the furniture."

I dropped three ice cubes in a jigger with a decent lack of haste, christened them with three fat fingers of whiskey, and inhaled half of it in a gulp. "Jesus, that's good!"

"Don't curse, Binky. And stop showing off."

I winced in spite of myself at the sound of that thin, plaintive voice. Once it must have been an aphrodisiac, especially when she sang. Now it merely grated.

"It's good to see you again, Melly."

"You drip, you saw me in school today." She peered closer at me. "But—gee, I don't know—you look different."

"So do you." It came out flat and not too gracious.

"Well, you don't have to be so sad about it. Bob, let's go dance."



That evidently concluded her obligations as a hostess. Abandoned, I leaned against the sink and watched that little ass, the centerfold of a thousand steamy fantasies, bounce out of the kitchen with *Bolling* in tow. Thank God for the drink; the rest of me was deflating fast. Memory was definitely suspect. I remembered her prettier, even beautiful, and much more mature. She was as unformed as myself. The eyes, to which I once wrote saccharine verse, were merely blue with a patina of intolerance over ignorance. The figure was child-cute, but after thirty-five years of grown women and a regiment of Broadway dancers, it retreated now as the half-realized first draft of an ordinary, mesomorphic female body. So far from a resurgence of passion, I felt more pity and understanding than anything else, like suffering the gauche sophistication of a daughter struggling to be grown-up. The idea of sleeping with Melly was more than absurd, even faintly incestuous. My overblown lust went flat as a bride's biscuit, and from the shadows of Shubert Alley I heard the mournful laughter of Rick Bluestone, who would never call a spade a heart. Mary Ellen Cosgrove at sixteen was interesting as a clam. But then, so was I.

More kids arrived, conversation got louder, high and giddy on youth alone. Melly and Bob danced with glum precision. Suffering from total recall, Frankie Magueria regaled anyone in earshot with Hope-Crosby jokes from *The Road to Morocco*. My bookish buddy had vanished, but Laura Schuppe, over at the piano, gave me an X-rated wink and a little beckoning toss of her head. I joined her on the bench.

"Find the scotch?"

"Huh? Yeah. Where's the little guy who was sitting over there?"

"Nelson Baxley, class of '46. Korea, Bronze Star and Purple Heart. Later: television production, five children, one Emmy, one duodenal ulcer."

I might have known. Laura would never even look at me, let alone wink. "Prince?"

"Nelson left, so I borrowed Laura."

"It doesn't bother her, having you in residence?"

"No, it's all rather split-screen. On her side she's drooling over that varsity jock in the maroon sweater. Nice girl, somewhat confused, poor self-image. Top model for *Vogue* and *Harper's*, 1949-55. One therapist, two nervous breakdowns, serial affairs with lovers of mixed gender. Cocaine, anorexia, born-again Christianity. Married a fundamentalist; currently works for the Moral Majority. Depressing. And Mary Ellen?"

"The booze is better. Thanks."

Laura sighed with a wisdom eons beyond her. "Nostalgia is always myopic. By the way, there's Miss Golowitz: trying to be invisible as usual."

Even as I recognized and remembered the fat, homely girl, my older heart went out to her. Teresa Golowitz—a dark, shapeless smudge among blondish altos in the school choral section. Coarse, frizzy hair, unplucked eyebrows that aspired to meet over her nose, and a faint but discernible mustache line. Thick legs blotched with unshaved hair under laddered nylons, and—insult to injury—a dress that would look better on Aunt Jemima. Among the relatively svelte Lambda Pi girls, she fit in like pork chops at a seder. I wondered why she'd been invited.

"That's why," the Prince read my thought casually. "Cast your mind back: Mary Ellen always had a few plain girls around to make her look good. And tonight is Teresa's turn in the barrel."

Memory sharpened to cruel clarity. My own family was conservative enough, but Teresa's orthodox parents made mine look like atheists. She came to school in grandma dresses and no makeup. She'd done her face for the party, no doubt on the bus in a bad light. I watched Teresa trying to press herself through the wall, fiddling with her hands, carmined mouth frozen in a stiff smile. I always avoided her in school; she was all the things I wanted to escape. Now I could see how much she might have wanted it, too.

"You're big on futures, Prince. What happened to her?" Two to one she married the kind of guy who wears his yarmulka to the office.

"Don't you remember?"

"Memory I'm learning not to trust."

"She committed suicide."

"No! She didn't—" But in the breath of denial I knew it was true, a sensation at school for a day or two. When Frankie Magueria told me, I said something like "Gee!" and briefly pondered the intangibles of life before getting on with adolescence.

"When?"

"Tonight."

## Influencing Teresa Golowitz

Yes ... it was just about this month. The Prince stroked soft chords with Laura's long fingers. "Took the bus back to town reflecting on accumulated griefs and loneliness, and the fact that no one at this golden gathering even said hello to her, not even Blaustein. She got off the bus and waited at the curb—as she is now, tearing at her cuticles, multiplying this night by so many others and so many more to come. She didn't like the product. When the next bus came along—behind schedule and traveling too fast—she stepped in front of it."

I shook my head, foggily mournful. "What a sad waste."

"Sad but academic." The Prince stood up. "Excuse me, Laura: has to go to the little girls' room. Had the immortal embrace yet?"

"No. Who needs it?"

Dismally true; the whole purpose of my flashback was on the cutting room floor. I was pondering whether to talk to Teresa or just leave now when Bill Tait roared away from a dirty-joke session to drape himself over the piano. "Bink! Give us 'Boogie Woogie.'"

"No!" someone else demanded. Do "Blue Lights."

"Hey, Bink's gonna play."

"Yay!"

I swung into "House of Blue Lights" to a chorus of squealed approval. It sounded fantastic, too good, until I realized I was playing with forty-five years of practice behind me and basic ideas still unknown outside of Fifty-second Street: steel rhythm under a velvet touch, block chords out of Monk, Powell, and Kenton that wouldn't be heard for years yet. The crowd began to collect around the piano. Mary Ellen got set to sing, her big thing at parties. Teresa Golowitz edged in next to her, almost apologetically, pudgy fingers dancing on the piano top. Melly took the vocal on the second verse; not a bad voice, but it wouldn't go past the fifth row without a mike.

*Fall in there, where the blue light's lit,*

*Down at the house, the House of Blue Lights.*

And then I heard it, rising over Mary Ellen's sweet, whitish soprano like a great big bird, that smoky alto soaring into the obligato release. Yah-duh-dee-duh-DAH-duh-duh-DEE-dah-dah, bouncing twice around the electrified room and sliding back into the lyric like she was born there. The hair rose on my head and arms; everyone stared at Teresa Golowitz who, perhaps for the first time and on the last night of her life, had decided to leave her mark. I rocked into another coda for her alone, begging.

"Take it, girl!"

Teresa did; together we worked things on

that basic boogie that weren't invented yet. And what a voice—not pure, not classical, but a natural for jazz. Teresa straightened out of her usual slump, closed her eyes, and let the good riffs roll. Sixteen years old; you could teach her a little about phrasing and breath control, but the instrument was incredible. She played with the notes, slurring over and under the melodic line with a pitch and rhythm you couldn't break with dynamite. All the greats had this for openers: Lutchter, Fitzgerald, Stafford, June Christy, Sassy Vaughn, all of them. Under the excitement, the Prince's voice whispered into my mind: *Of course she's beautiful. It's her requiem.*

It could well be. When we finished the number, I bounced up and smeared her lipstick with an off-center kiss. "Baby, you're gorgeous. Don't ever think you're not."

"Hey, lookit old Blaustein the wolf!"

Mary Ellen snickered; as a vocalist her nose was a little out of joint—say about a mile. "Oh, it's a love match!"

Teresa blushed crimson; I doubt if she was kissed much at home, let alone at parties. She started to retreat, but I grabbed her hand. "Don't go, I need you. You know 'Opus One'?"

She hesitated, then made her decision. She glared with fierce pride at Mary Ellen and stood even straighter. "Hit it, Blaustein."

I zapped into the machine-gun opening with pure joy. "Opus One" is a real catting number. Most of the kids started to dance, the rest jiggling and beating time on the piano top. From Teresa, we hadn't heard anything yet. She vocalized the soprano sax break from the Dorsey orchestration with a scatty-doo riff that wailed like Nellie Lutchter's "Lake Charles." She shouldn't end like this. In four years or less there'd be recording techniques able to put that voice on the moon, and she wants to off herself in an hour or two. The hell with it all, if I could just keep her from that.

We rolled up the wall-shaking finish, both of us out of breath. Teresa parked herself on the bench beside me, guzzling sloppily at her drink. "You are reet, Blaustein. You are definitely a groove."

"Me! Where'd you pick up jazz like that?"

"Who picks up? You feel it. The first time is like remembering."

"Feeling good, Terri?"

"Yeah, kinda." She grinned shyly. "I always wanted to be called that."

"Terri it is. And take advice: tomorrow we start working together."

Her eyes clouded. "Tomorrow ..."

"Unless you're not around, you know what I mean? Go home, take a *shivitz*. Tomorrow things

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will look pure gold. And when I call New York about you—"

I talked fast, promising, conning, cajoling, speaking of agents and record producers not even born yet, anything to get her mind off the loser track and that fatal bus. Still talking, I steered her into the kitchen, spiked her a little Pepsi in a lot of bourbon, a new scotch for me. I'd bomb the suicide out of her if I could, sing it out: one hour when she and everybody in range knew Teresa Golowitz was a person, a talent, and worth the future.

We were literally dragged back to the piano. Play more. Sing, Teresa. Please sing, Teresa. She didn't know how to handle it all, never opened up like this before. I ruffled a big fanfare chord on the piano.

"Ladies and gentlemen—the fourteen karats of Miss Terri Gold!"

"Yay!"

"Huh?" said Teresa. "What's with Gold?"

"Just like Blaustein. I yell 'Golowitz!'—who'd come? Hang on, Terri. We are going to the moon."

I launched into music so far beyond eight-to-the-bar that the kids were mystified. Way-out Monk, Shearing riffs, Charlie Ventura stuff, bop sounds most of the world hadn't heard yet, like "The Man from Minton's" and the clean, hard-rocking Previn-Manne "I Could Have Danced All Night," still twelve years in the future. Terri's eyes were moons of discovery before she dug it. Like she said, a kind of remembering. On "To Be or Not to Bop," she came in with her own obligato, sure and pure.

"Hey, Bink," Frankie Magueria wondered. "What is that?"

Terri didn't need the name. She knew. I dropped the beat and backed her with light chords in implied time. She was pure gold; with a little grooming she could play clubs now, but she had to live for that. For the other kids, it was too far out; they needed a beat. Teresa yearned visibly after Bob Bolling, who left the living room hand in hand

with Mary Ellen. I saw her glow fade back to the one-minute-to-zotz look she had before singing. Sadly she glanced at the clock.

"Terri, you want to try a ballad?"

"Gee, I don't know. It's late."

"One ballad. Name it. You got a favorite?"

"Do you know 'I Fall in Love Too Easily'?"

"Does Burns know Allen?" I ripped out a four-bar intro. "Fly, baby. The sky is yours."

Terri closed her eyes, lifted her head, and sang. The room grew a little quieter. It's a great old number, an evergreen from an early Sinatra film that you can still hear on FM in New York. All right, critical? Teresa wasn't as sharp on slow ballads, not the best phrasing, a little wobbly on drawn-out vowels, but her feeling for the arc and sense of lyric was sure and solid. The kids were very quiet now; she had them in the palm of her hand. Then she did something that curried my hair: ended one phrase softly and, on the same breath, swelled into the first word of the next with a gorgeous crescendo I felt down to my socks.

I've auditioned a thousand singers. You can hear their technique and training in the first line. What Golowitz had no one can teach. I heard her plain in that short phrase, locked in with a soul full of *schmerz* and one slender lifeline of music. A homely girl, a fat loser in the svelte Rita Hayworth era; anyone could hurt her and everyone would, but when she sang it would all be on the line, bare and beautiful. A voice you listened to because it was your own. A smoky, black coffee, tapped-out-and-running-on-guts sound you don't hear anymore unless you own some of the old Billie Holiday sides. Or another voice, quite different but as full of life and pain, that will pack the Palace Theater twenty years from tonight with the same self-lacerating magic in every song. A miracle called Garland.

We finished the song. The kids drifted away, liking but not really understanding what they'd heard, ready for the record player and more grab-ass to music. Teresa looked again at the mantel clock.

"I gotta go. It's late."

"See me tomorrow, Terri?"

"I don't know ..."

"Promise."

"Blaustein, don't ask. There's a lot of problems."

"Work with me. There's people in New York—"

"Don't put on," she said hopelessly. "You don't know from New York."

"Promise me, damn it."

"Why?" It was a wail, a cry for help. Already in it you could hear the gray decision, a door closing in Losersville. What I answered wasn't from



## Influencing Teresa Golowitz

sixteen. I wondered if sixteen could dig it.

"I know from New York and a lot of things. Don't blow it, Terri. You got more to give in thirty-two bars than most people find in a lifetime. You want to be loved? So does the world. They'll love you, Terri. They'll beat your goddam door down. But it takes time and paying your dues and maybe a little trust. So see me tomorrow and we start."

Teresa tried to smooth the crushed material of her dress over shapeless hips. "Blaustein—you're such a *noodge*." She said it like a kiss. "G'night."

I tried to follow her, but a rather strong influence glued me to the piano bench. You've done your best, Mr. B. Now a little trust.

So I sat there guzzling scotch too fast, which was a mistake. Bluestone could guzzle, Binky couldn't. I took a few deep breaths and watched Frankie Maguerra dance with Laura Schuppe through the wrong end of a telescope, then wobbled upstairs to the bathroom, wondering if I'd be sick. Apparently there was enough Bluestone ballast to hold it down. After a few moments glumly pondering the toilet depths, I scrubbed my face with a washcloth and grinned farewell to Binky.

"See you at Sardi's, kid."

Wavering toward the stairs, I heard Mary Ellen's voice from behind a half-closed door: "*Day-amm, Bob!* I said *stop*."

"For God's sake, what's the matter now? On, off. You're a real tease, you know that?"

I pushed in the door and leaned against the jamb. They didn't see me, sitting stiff and apart on the edge of the bed. Melly looked confused and angry.

"You don't have to be so crude about it."

"Oh . . . shit."

"And don't talk to me like that."

Poor Bob: eighteen, all balls, and no finesse. He even rated a twinge of sympathy. "Hey, stud," I said, "why not try a little conversation first?"

Mary Ellen whirled and stiffened. Bob only looked annoyed. "Blaustein, blow. Get out of here."

I felt booze-brave. "Better idea, schmuck. Why don't you go get started on your gall bladder."

"Listen, you—"

"Oh, he's right!" Mary Ellen screeched. "Go home. Go home, you're disgusting."

Confused, outgunned, Bob threw her one classic grimace of exasperation. "All *right*. But I won't be back."

"Bet?" I offered as he pushed past me and clumped down the stairs.

"What a jerk." Melly collapsed in a frustrated bundle. "I don't care if he never comes back. I wouldn't see him again if he was the last man on earth."

"Sure you will." *Because for you, he is.* That was less of a future than an epitaph. The whole

thing was vaguely sad. I wanted to go.

"God." Her shoulders began to shake. "I'm surrounded with drips."

I put my arm around the forlorn, half-grown lump of her uncertainty: more experienced than her mother would imagine and a lot less than she thought. Sixteen, the voice of the turtle bellowing in her blood, wanting all the things she couldn't handle yet, and all she had were the cards girls got dealt in 1944. Unless you were a freak genius or something, you got married. You got a man. There wasn't anything else; not for mommy, not for you. Later it might be easy, now it was hell. Only idiots want to be young again. It's a miserable gauntlet to run, but looking back later, Melly would block out the insecurity and pain until only the glow was left to shimmer in soft focus, and her picture would be no more accurate than mine.

"Take it one day at a time, Melly. It's more fun that way."

She willed against my shoulder. "Binky, are you my really truly close friend?"

"Guess I am." I pulled her gently to her feet. Her lips found my cheek and then my own mouth. A very split-screen moment: enjoyment, regrets, and a fleeting taste of what it would have been to have a daughter. I might have been good at that.

"You're nice, Bink. Just sometimes you're a jerk. You going home?"

"Time to go."

"See you in school."

"S'long, Melly. It was a swell party."

Wrestling into my coat downstairs, I peeked once more into the living room, at the kids I grew up with. A damned fool, happy and sad, high on life more than anything else, I ducked for the front door before they caught me crying. But someone did.

"Hey, Blaustein!"

Teresa Golowitz swayed precariously in the kitchen hallway, flashing a fresh drink and a bleary grin. "Her!!"

"Terri! I thought—"

"Ah, hu-hell," she gulped. "I felt so good from singing, I figured one more for the road. I have just two questions for you."

"You didn't go. You didn't—"

"Don't change the su-subject. First: what c'n I do for hu-hiccupps?"

"Hold your breath and take nine sips of water."

"And the big qu-uk-question," said Teresa Golowitz. "What *time* tomorrow?"

"I'll find you." Gloriously smashed, she couldn't see the tears start. "Come on, how about we take the same bus?"

Terri was still grinning and hiccupping when the scene cut.



**M**y penthouse was still there, but with a few major changes. On the floor, Rick Bluestone was beginning to wilt like leftover salad. The record jackets near the turntable were different, but still classics of their kind. Stan Kenton had metamorphosed to *Kenton Digs Gold*. The Pete Rugolo album was titled simply *Pure Gold* and *Rugolo*. Beside them lay a third: *Gold Sings Bluestone Plays Gold*. On the wall just above the piano was a photograph of that vulnerable, indestructible head lifted, the mouth parted in a lyric. I remembered it with hiccups and much, much younger.

A lot of change, a lot of years. Some great songs.

Across the back of the album we cut together, she'd scrawled in a looping hand: *Blaustein, you're such a noodge—Terri Gold loves you.*

The Prince rose and straightened his Sulka tie. "Whither away, Mr. Blaustein?"

I turned once more to the window. After thirty-five years of looking at Manhattan, the river, and Queens, I wouldn't miss them all that much. As for Sarah, don't ask. With any luck she'd be out of Air-Wick. "Topside, I suppose. Poppa will expect me."

A nuance of mild discomfort shaded the Prince's *savoir-faire*. "Not just yet, I'm afraid."

"Why not? You said anywhere."

"Of course—in time. And time is what we have perverted, not to say brutalized. You won't be welcome just now, I regret to say." He didn't sound regretful at all, more like a sweepstakes winner. "You've played merry hob with the Grand Scheme. Terri Gold: three husbands, four children, three grandchildren, six million-seller records, and a career that threatens never to end—all from a girl who was supposed to be a statistic at sixteen. Where Topside is concerned, it's best we maintain a very low profile until—"

"We?" I rounded on him in a chill of realization. "We?"

"You, me, what's the difference?"

"That's why you were all the time with Golo-

witz. You knew! You bastard, you knew all the time!"

He nodded in modest pleasure. "As the lyric goes, it had to be you. Of all that nebulous crew at the party, you were the first slated to die after Teresa. And the best bet. I field the shots, I don't call them."

The immensity of it collapsed me on the sofa, gaping. "You *gonif*. So you just waited until I packed it in and—"

"Influenced." The Prince capped it with a satisfied smile. "I'm an artist like yourself, a sculptor of possibilities. What could you change with Mary Ellen, who was cast and immutable by the age of ten?"

I stared at him, unbelieving. "Dead one day and already I need a lawyer."

"And you shall have the best," the Prince conciliated. "For services rendered. Darrow loves cases like this."

"I'll bet. No wonder you get lousy reviews Topside."

"Topside!" he flared in disgust. "Stodgy, pragmatic conservatives. Liszt should die of fever before he's thirty, Schubert before he could write the glorious Ninth? Never! It's not all fun, believe me. Win some, lose some. Lose a Shelley, lose a Byron, a Kapell. Lose a Radriquet before he's twenty-five, a Gershwin at thirty-nine. But a Terri Gold at sixteen? No, the world is threadbare enough. And no one Topside, not even my celestial Brother—the white sheep of an otherwise brilliant family—has ever understood the concept of *creative* history. What in the cosmos does it matter if I make a mess of their records? I create! Like any artist, I need to be recognized. I need to be understood. Most of all," the Prince concluded wearily, "I need another drink."

I didn't understand half of it, but—you know?—I couldn't really stay mad at him. Whatever else, bad press or no, the guy has *chutzpah*. And there are all those years of Terri Gold.

"How long has Terri got?"

"Ages, Mr. Blaustein. Dogs' years. More records, more men, more grandchildren. She'll be roaring drunk when she goes and happy as a bee among flowers. And the last drink will be her best." The Prince polished off his own, neat. "Shall we?"

"Uh ... where to?"

"As advertised: your choice. But till the heat's off, I'd suggest Petronius's party. There's someone positively seething to meet you, that clever little woman from the Algonquin set. Which reminds me."

The Prince swept up the Glenmorangie in one protective arm, the other through mine. "Dottie said to bring you *and* the scotch. *Allons*, Mr. Blaustein. The night is young!" 17

# Miss Mouse and the Fourth Dimension

by  
Robert Sheckley

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF A WOMAN—  
ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S RAISED TO A POWER OF FOUR!

I first met Charles Foster at the Claerston Award dinner at Leadbeater's Hall in the Strand. It was my second night in London. I had come to England with the hope of signing some new authors for my list. I am Max Seidel, publisher of Manjusri Books. We are a small, esoteric publishing company operating out of Linwood, New Jersey—just me and Miss Thompson, my assistant. My books sell well to the small but faithful portion of the population interested in spiritualism, out-of-body experiences, Atlantis, flying saucers, and New Age technology. Charles Foster was one of the men I had come to meet.

Pam Devore, our British sales representative, pointed Foster out to me. I saw a tall, good-looking man in his middle thirties, with a great mane of reddish blond hair, talking animatedly with two dowager types. Sitting beside him, listening intently, was a small woman in her late twenties with neat, plain features and fine chestnut hair.

"Is that his wife?" I asked.

Pam laughed. "Goodness, no! Charles is too fond of women to actually marry one. That's Miss Mouse."

"Is 'Mouse' an English name?"

"It's just Charles's nickname for her. Actually, she's not very mouselike at all. Marmoset might be more like it, or even wolverine. She's Mimi Royce, a society photographer. She's quite well off—the Royce textile mills in Lancashire, you know—and she adores Charles, poor thing."

"He does seem to be an attractive man," I said.

"I suppose so," Pam said, "if you like the type." She glanced at me to see how I was taking that, then laughed when she saw my expression.

"Yes, I am rather prejudiced," she confessed. "Charles used to be rather interested in me until he found his own true love."

"Who was—?"

"Himself, of course. Come, let me introduce you."

Charles was the sort of esoteric writer who goes out and has adventures and then writes them up in a portentous style. His search was for—well, what shall I call it? The Beyond? The Occult? The Interface? Twenty years in this business and I still don't know how to describe, in one simple phrase, the sort of book I publish. Charles Foster's last book had dealt with three months he had spent with a Baluchistani dervish in the desert of Kush under incredibly austere conditions. What had he gotten out of it? A direct though fleeting knowledge of the indivisible oneness of things, a sense of the mystery and grandeur of existence. . . . In short, the usual thing. And he had gotten a bock out of it; and that, too, is the usual thing.

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We set up a lunch for the next day. I rented a car and drove to Charles's house in Oxfordshire. It was a beautiful old thatched-roof building set in the middle of five acres of rolling countryside. It was called Sepoy Cottage, despite the fact that it had five bedrooms and three parlors. It didn't actually belong to Charles, as he told me immediately. It belonged to Mimi Royce.

"But she lets me use it whenever I like," he said. "Mouse is such a dear." He smiled like a well-bred child talking about his favorite aunt. "She's so interested in one's little adventures, one's trips along the interface between reality and the ineffable. . . . Insists on typing up my manuscripts just for the pleasure it gives her to read them first."

"That is lucky," I said, "typing rates being what they are these days."

Just then Mimi came in with tea. Foster regarded her with bland indifference. Either he was unaware of her obvious adoration of him, or he

Foster knew about Manjusri Books and was



# Miss Mouse and the Fourth Dimension

chose not to acknowledge it. Mimi, for her part, did not seem to mind. I assumed that I was seeing a display of the British National Style in affairs of the heart—subdued, muffled, unobtrusive. She went away after serving us, and Charles and I talked auras and ley-lines for a while, then got down to the topic of real interest to us both—his next book.

"It's going to be a bit unusual," he told me, leaning back and templing his fingers.

"Another spiritual adventure?" I asked.

"What will it be about?"

"Guess!" he said.

"Let's see. Are you by any chance going to Machu Picchu to check out the recent reports of spaceship landings?"

He shook his head. "Elton Travis is already covering it for Mystic Revelations Press. No, my next adventure will take place right here in Sepoy Cottage."

"Have you discovered a ghost or poltergeist here?"

"Nothing so mundane."

"Then I really have no idea," I told him.

"What I propose," Foster said, "is to create an opening into the unknown right here in Sepoy Cottage, and to journey through it into the unimaginable. And then, of course, to write up what I've found there."

"Indeed," I said.

"Are you familiar with Von Helmholtz's work?"

"Was he the one who read tarot cards for Frederick the Great?"

"No, that was Manfred Von Helmholtz. I am referring to Wilhelm, a famous mathematician and scientist in the nineteenth century. He maintained that it was theoretically possible to see directly into the fourth dimension."

I turned the concept over in my mind. It didn't do much for me.

"This 'fourth dimension' to which he refers," Foster went on, "is synonymous with the spiritual or aetherial realm of the mystics. The name of the place changes with the times, but the region itself is unchanging."

I nodded. Despite myself, I am a believer. That's what brought me into this line of work. But I also know that illusion and self-deception are the rule in these matters rather than the exception.

"But this spirit realm or fourth dimension," Foster went on, "is also our everyday reality. Spirits surround us. They move through that strange realm which Von Helmholtz called the fourth dimension. Normally they can't be seen."

It sounded to me like Foster was extemporizing the first chapter of his book. Still, I didn't interrupt.

"Our eyes are blinded by everyday reality.

But there are techniques by means of which we can train ourselves to see what *else* is there. Do you know about Hinton's cubes? Hinton is mentioned by Martin Gardner in *Mathematical Carnival*. Charles Howard Hinton was an eccentric American mathematician who, around 1910, came up with a scheme for learning how to visualize a tesseract, also called a hypercube or four-dimensional square. His technique involved colored cubes which fit together to form a single master cube. Hinton felt that one could learn to see the separate colored cubes in the mind, and then, mentally, to manipulate and rotate them, fold them into and out of the greater cube shape, and to do this faster and faster until at last a gestalt forms and the hypercube springs forth miraculously in your mind."

He paused. "Hinton said that it was a hell of a lot of work. And later investigators, according to Gardner, have warned of psychic dangers even in attempting something like this."

"It sounds like it could drive you crazy," I said.

"Some of those investigators *did* wig," he admitted cheerfully. "But that might have been from frustration. Hinton's procedure demands an inhuman power of concentration. Only a master of yoga could be expected to possess that."

"Such as yourself?"

"My dear fellow, I can barely remember what I've just read in the newspaper. Luckily, concentration is not the only path into the unknown. Fascination can more easily lead us to the mystic path. Hinton's principle is sound, but it needs to be combined with Aquarian Age technology to make it work. That is what I have done."

He led me into the next room. There, on a low table, was what I took at first to be a piece of modernistic sculpture. It had a base of cast iron. A central shaft came up through its middle, and on top of the shaft was a sphere about the size of a human head. Radiating in all directions from the sphere were lucite rods. At the end of each rod was a cube. The whole contraption looked like a cubist porcupine with blocks stuck to the end of his spines.

Then I saw that the blocks had images or signs painted on their faces. There were Sanskrit, Hebrew, and Arabic letters, Freemason and Egyptian symbols, Chinese ideograms, and other figures from many different lores. Now the thing no longer looked to me like a porcupine. Now it looked like a bristling phalanx of mysticism, marching forth to do battle against common sense. And even though I'm in the business, it made me shudder.

"He didn't know it, of course," Foster said, "but what Hinton stumbled upon was the mandala principle. His cubes were the parts; put them all together in your mind and you create the Eternal, the Unchanging, the Solid Mandala, or four-dimen-

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sional space, depending upon which terminology you prefer. Hinton's cubes were a three-dimensional exploded view of an aetheral object. This object refuses to come together in our everyday reality. It is the unicorn who flees from the view of man—"

"—but lays its head in the lap of a virgin," I finished for him.

He shrugged it off. "Never mind the figures of speech, old boy. Mouse will unscramble my metaphors when she types up the manuscript. The point is, I can use Hinton's brilliant discovery of the exploded mandala whose closure produces the ineffable object of endless fascination. I can journey down the endless spiral into the unknown. This is how the trip begins."

He pushed a switch on the base of the contraption. The sphere began to revolve, the lucite arms turned, and the cubes on the ends of those arms turned, too, creating an effect both hypnotic and disturbing. I was glad when Foster turned it off.

"My Mandala Machine!" he cried triumphantly. "What do you think?"

"I think you could get your head into a lot of trouble with that device," I told him.

"No, no," he said irritably. "I mean, what do you think of it all as the subject for a book?"

No matter what else he was, Foster was a genuine writer. A genuine writer is a person who will descend voluntarily into the flaming pits of hell for all eternity, as long as he's allowed to record his impressions and send them back to earth for publication. I thought about the book that would most likely result from Foster's project. I estimated its audience at about one hundred and fifty people including friends and relatives. Nevertheless, I heard myself saying, "I'll buy it." That's how I manage to stay a small and unsuccessful publisher despite being so smart.

I returned to London shortly after that. Next day I drove to Glastonbury to spend a few days with Claude Upshank, owner of the Great White Brotherhood Press. We have been good friends, Claude and I, ever since we met ten years ago at a flying saucer convention in Barcelona.

"I don't like it," Claude said, when I told him about Foster's project. "The mandala principle is

potentially dangerous. You can really get into trouble when you start setting up autonomous feedback loops in your brain like that."

Claude had studied acupuncture and Roling at the Hardrada Institute in Malibu, so I figured he knew what he was talking about. Nevertheless, I thought that Charles had a lot of savvy in these matters and could take care of himself.

When I telephoned Foster two days later, he told me that the project was going very well. He had added several refinements to the Mandala Machine: "Sound effects, for one. I'm using a special tape of Tibetan horns and gongs. The overtones, sufficiently amplified, can send you into instant trance." And he had also bought a strobe light to flash into his eyes at six to ten beats a second: "The epileptic rate, you know. It's ideal for loosening up your head." He claimed that all of this deepened his state of trance and increased the clarity of the revolving cubes. "I'm very near to success now, you know."

I thought he sounded tired and close to hysteria. I begged him to take a rest.

"Nonsense," he said. "Show must go on, eh?"

A day later, Foster reported that he was right on the brink of the final breakthrough. His voice wavered, and I could hear him panting and wheezing between words. "I'll admit it's been more difficult than I had expected. But now I'm being assisted by a certain substance which I had the foresight to bring with me. I am not supposed to mention it over the telephone in view of the law of the land and the ever-present possibility of snoots on the line, so I'll just remind you of Anroop Machen's 'Novel of the White Powder' and let you work out the rest for yourself. Call me tomorrow. The fourth dimension is finally coming together."

The next day Mimi answered the telephone and said that Foster was refusing to take any calls. She reported him as saying that he was right on the verge of success and could not be interrupted. He asked his friends to be patient with him during this difficult period.

The next day it was the same, Mimi answering, Foster refusing to speak to us. That night I conferred with Claude and Pam.

We were in Pam's smart Chelsea apartment. We sat together in the bay window drinking tea and watching the traffic pour down the King's Road into Sloane Square. Claude asked, "Does Foster have any family?"

"None in England," Pam said. "His mother and brother are on holiday in Bali."

"Any close friends?"

"Mouse, of course," Pam said.

We looked at each other. An odd presentiment had occurred to us simultaneously, a feeling

# Miss Mouse and the Fourth Dimension

that something was going terribly wrong.

"But this is ridiculous," I said. "Mimi absolutely adores him, and she's a very competent woman. What could there be to worry about?"

"Let's call once more," Claude said.

We tried, and were told that Mimi's telephone was out of order. We decided to go to Sepoy Cottage at once.

Claude drove us out in his old Morgan. Mimi met us at the door. She looked thoroughly exhausted, yet there was a serenity about her which I found just a little uncanny.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said, leading us inside. "You have no idea how frightening it's all been. Charles came close to losing his mind in these last days."

"But why didn't you tell us?" I demanded.

"Charles implored me not to. He told me—and I believed him—that he and I had to see this thing through together. He thought it would be dangerous to his sanity to bring in anyone else at this point."

Claude made a noise that sounded like a snort. "Well, what happened?"

"It all went very well at first," Mimi said. "Charles began to spend increasingly longer periods in front of the machine, and he came to enjoy the experience. Soon I could get him away only to eat, and grudgingly at that. Then he gave up food altogether. After a while he no longer needed the machine. He could see the cubes and their faces in his head, could move them around at any speed he wanted, bring them together or spread them apart. The final creation, however, the coming together of the hypercube, was still eluding him. He went back to the machine, running it now at its highest speed."

Mimi sighed. "Of course, he pushed himself too hard. This time, when he turned off the machine, the mandala continued to grow and mutate in his head. Each cube had taken on hallucinatory solidity. He said the symbols gave off a hellish light that hurt his eyes. He couldn't stop those cubes from thundering through his mind. He felt that he was being suffocated in a mass of alien signs. He grew agitated, swinging quickly between elation and despair. It was during one of his elated swings that he ripped out the telephone."

"You should have sent for us!" Claude said.

"There was simply no time. Charles knew what was happening to him. He said we had to set up a counter-conditioning program immediately. It involved changing the symbols on the cube faces. The idea was to break up the obsessive image-trains through the altered sequence. I set it up, but it didn't seem to work for Charles. He was fading away before my eyes, occasionally rousing himself

to murmur, 'The horror, the horror . . .'"

"Bloody hell!" Claude exploded. "And then?"

"I felt that I had to act immediately. Charles's system of counter-conditioning had failed. I decided that he needed a different sort of symbol to look at—something simple and direct, something reassuring—"

Just then Charles came slowly down the stairs. He had lost a lot of weight since I had seen him last, and his face was haggard. He looked thin, happy, and not quite sane.

"I was just napping," he said. "I've got rather a lot of sleep to catch up on. Did Mouse tell you how she saved what little is left of my sanity?" He put his arm around her shoulders. "She's marvelous, isn't she? And to think that I only realized yesterday that I loved her. We're getting married next week, and you're all invited."

Mimi said, "I thought we were flying down to Monte Carlo and getting married in the city hall."

"Why, so we are," Charles looked bewildered for a moment. He touched his head with the unconscious pathos of the wounded soldier in the movie who hasn't yet realized that half his head is blown away. "The old think-piece hasn't quite recovered yet from the beating I gave it with those wretched cubes. If Mimi hadn't been here, I don't know what would have happened to me."

They beamed at us, the instant happy couple produced by Hinton's devilish cubes. The transformation of Charles's feelings toward Mimi—from fond indifference to blind infatuation—struck me as bizarre and dreamlike. They were Svengali and Trilby with the sexes reversed, a case of witchcraft rather than love's magic.

"It's going to be all right now, Charles," Mimi said.

"Yes, love, I know it is," Charles smiled, but the animation had gone out of his face. He lifted his hand to his head again, and his knees began to sag. Mimi, her arm around his waist, half supported and half dragged him to the stairs.

"I'll just get him up to bed," she said.

Claude, Pam and I stood in the middle of the room, looking at each other. Then, with a single accord, we turned and went into the parlor where the Mandala Machine was kept.

We approached it with awe, for it was a modern version of ancient witchcraft. I could imagine Charles sitting in front of the thing, its arms revolving, the cubes turning and flashing, setting up a single ineradicable image in his mind. The ancient Hebrew, Chinese, and Egyptian letters were gone. All of the faces of all the cubes now bore a single symbol—direct and reassuring, just as Mimi had said, but hardly simple. There were twenty cubes, with six faces to a cube, and pasted to each surface was a photograph of Mimi Royce. ☐

# Dream Along With Me

by Reginald Bretnor

HER LOVE WAS UNNATURAL AND FORBIDDEN,  
THE PENALTY DREADFUL . . . and DIVINE.

Tom Merton Monahan of the *Examiner* was the last man to talk with Emmie Shoalts before she died, which was not surprising, since almost no one else on the Hall of Justice night crews, police or newsmen, ever really spoke to her. Most of them didn't even see her. She was as nonexistent for them as her little cart, her mops and buckets, her cleaning rags, or the worn gray stockings collapsed around her swollen ankles; and those who did notice her either grunted, "Hi, Emmie, how's things?" or, at the best, paused a moment to kid her, good-naturedly, about her hat.

It was that hat which had first drawn Tom Monahan's attention, reminding him at once of hats worn by ancient Dublin charwomen during his two years at Trinity College there. It was a dismal ruin of a hat, the sadly resurrected specter of someone's Easter bonnet, its flowers and ribbons surely saved from abandoned gravestone bouquets. Tom Monahan had never mentioned it, but he had spoken to her, his voice and manner half gentle mockery, half that sincere, unassertive sympathy one expects (but does not always find) in the confessional, the voice and manner that had helped to make his reputation as a first-rate police reporter. Cops and their officers confided in him, to the point where the Chief himself had intervened more than once to save him from a well-deserved "Driving While Under" handed out by some sheriff's deputy or the state highway patrol, and criminals unloaded to him more freely than to their lawyers or psychiatrists.

That first night, he had introduced himself to her when, as he always did at the first opportunity, he left the pressroom to go around the corner to Breedon's all-night bar, unobtrusively and illegally kept open as a courtesy to press and police. He greeted her as formally as he would an opera star, or the mayor's wife, or the most successful madame in a city famous for its great bordellos. He asked her name, and handed her his card: *Thomas Merton Monahan*.

In Dublin, before that at Tulane, and even earlier, during his unhappy years at the seminary into which his mother and his Aunt Eileen had urged him, his full name had always aroused the interest of the literarily inclined, starting many a conversation for him, though Merton had been his mother's maiden name and she was in no way related to the poet. Naturally Emmie Shoalts did

not recognize it. Nevertheless she smiled at him and said, in her rasping, coughing voice, that Merton was a real pretty name; she'd always wished she'd had a name like that instead of Shoalts, which was spelled different back in the old country but which Shoalts's old man had changed because that was what they told him to do at Ellis Island, and her own name had been a pretty one back in New Jersey, when she'd been a girl. Emma Marie, she'd been then, not Emmie. Emma Marie. And—when she had her dream—she shuffled on her knees embarrassedly—then she always heard her ma's sweet voice calling after her, "Emma Marie! Emma Marie!" just like it'd always been.

Tom Monahan had listened to her, looking down at her featureless, sagging face, smiling at her along his long, keen Irish nose, and he'd remarked that surely she must've been a lovely girl herself to go along with such a pretty name; and then he had gone on to Breedon's.

After that, whenever his path crossed hers, they always talked, at least for a few minutes. Neither of them ever sought the other out, except that at Easter and before Christmas he always brought her a rose or two, or a spray of snowdrops. And neither really confided in the other. She told him nothing of her life with Shoalts—of the long, dreadful years of shabby furnished rooms, the greasy sinks and crusted hot-plates, the bathrooms shared with ten or a dozen others, the time crawling endlessly against a backdrop of Shoalts hunting jobs, finding jobs, drinking himself out of jobs. She told him nothing of the sodden Chicago summer nights, with Shoalts stinking in the bed beside her, stinking of beer, of sweat, and of his job swamping out in the slaughterhouse; of Shoalts and his sudden strange demands on her, which had so frightened her at first; of how she had retreated behind an armor of cheap white port or cheaper muscatel. She didn't mention Shoalts's raving death, or the fact that every time she cleaned a cuspidor she was reminded of him. She talked about the weather. She talked about the tv shows she watched before she slept. She finally did tell him all about her dream; and it was because of it that Tom Monahan, in his half-mocking way, came to cherish her. He found it rare and beautiful and strangely precious—a small miracle, if he had still believed in miracles.

She told him how, when she got off work at midnight, she'd go on home—she only lived a couple





## Dream Along With Me

of blocks away—and cook up something so as not to get started drinking on an empty stomach, and settle down in front of the tv with—she always winked—a jug, and watch the late, late shows, and finally doze off.

It was then that the dream would come to her. In it, all of a sudden, she was young again, and sort of in the country, like maybe on a farm, with all around her all this cool green grass and little flowers, and she was walking through them in her bare feet, and up ahead of her, beyond the trees, there was a hill where the sun was rising, all red and golden, though she couldn't see it yet, and—behind the hill a boy was waiting for her, somebody real special . . . She knew she loved him and that he loved her. Then, as she walked toward him, faster and faster in her eagerness, always she'd hear her ma's voice calling in the distance: "Emma Marie! Emma Marie! You come on back here, honey! You can't go walkin' there in just your bare feet! Might be there're snakes."

And always she turned back, because she loved her ma. But that was all right, too. The dream just seemed to last forever, and she *knew* whoever was behind the hill would keep on waiting for her. She never tired of telling Tom Monahan about it, and the telling varied only in its smallest details—a meadowlark singing out in the clear spring air, an emerald lizard skittering from her path.

Monahan would listen to it all again, realizing that it was somehow perfect, and always he would feel a bitter twinge of envy, quelled instantly by shame, for in his own life there had been much that was rare and beautiful. He had lived and loved and argued in the city of Joyce and Synge and Lady Gregory, walking among the dreams of Ireland's poets, and he still had music and the theater, good food and better liquor, and finely printed books, and the bright ikon of his own balanced rationalism, and the sudden excitement that always came to shatter the tedium of the pressroom and of Breedon's. He could feel that her life had been at worst an agony, at best a desolation; but she had something he did not have.

For he himself had had no dreams of wonder or of exaltation. He knew that he did dream, as all men do, but his dreams vanished at his wakening, usually leaving only an uncertain aftertaste of apprehension or a vague revulsion, of perils undefined and narrowly escaped. Years before, during his adolescence in the ingrown, self-enclosed all-male world of the seminary, they sometimes had touched the fringe of nightmare, leaving him in a cold sweat of uncomprehended terror at their dissolution. But that had ended when he had escaped, shedding the Church like a dry, discarded skin, sheathing himself in a polite, amused intellectual materialism ap-

propriate, perhaps, to an Edwardian drawing room—an attitude that had actually endeared him to disputatious Jesuits like his cousin Austin, who invariably (over a good meal and a glass of wine) would fence with him about it, only smiling a little sadly when, as always, he failed to shake Monahan's stand. Only once in their long association had Austin let anger flare during their arguments. Monahan had attacked clerical celibacy, saying he'd be damned before he'd let anyone caponize him like that; and Austin, in a voice suddenly as hard as Ignatius Loyola's, had thundered at him not to be a fool, that you had to be a real man to be a priest. Monahan, who was very fond of his cousin, never brought the subject up again.

Even in Ireland, in that isle of dreams, his mind showed him no splendid visions while he slept; and during his too brief, too, too unhappy marriage, the whip of nightmare had occasionally flicked at him again. Then, of course, there had been affairs, each seemingly shorter than the last, each less intense, each more distressing to his mother while she lived, and to his Aunt Eileen. Now, working at night and always fortifying himself with Breedon's aid, he slept untroubled; and when his aunt awakened him for brunch, as she did every day when she returned from mass, any dark shadows sleep might have left to haunt the corners of his huge, book-lined room were quickly dissipated. Generally speaking, Tom Monahan was satisfied with life and with himself; and he always smiled wryly, with that same gentle mockery he turned against the world, when he thought that he, with all he was and all he had, still envied a miserable old woman the one perfection of her dream.

Almost at the first, she'd said he was the only person she'd ever told about it, so he told no one else; one of his professional virtues was that he could keep a confidence. And in the two and a half years of their acquaintance, between their first conversation and their last, he scarcely mentioned her to anyone, except perhaps when one of the Hall of Justice boys kidded him about bringing her a posy.

Indeed, very little had changed between those two encounters. She was puffier now, her face a sickly gray, and her hat seemed almost to be woven into her thin gray hair, like a forgotten bird nest. Tom Monahan himself had scarcely altered; his brown, curly hair was not quite as thick, the fine capillaries along his cheekbones and on his nose a bit more prominent, and his belt had perhaps been let out another notch. He stopped beside her in the hall, they talked about inconsequential things, and then, with that smile of his, he asked about her dream; and she beamed up at him, a sudden light behind her flat, dull eyes, and told him that, Mr. Monahan, sir, it was, well, getting *brighter* somehow, and that she could hardly wait to get

*She saw him suddenly.  
Vast and naked,  
mightily muscled,  
bearded in his manhood,  
and terribly, terribly male,  
he towered above her.*

home after work. Then he had walked on the Breedon's.

Emmie Shoalts, as always, knocked off at midnight. She stored her cart and cleaning things away, washed up, and though she was bone-weary and her legs ached even more than they usually did, she put on lipstick and eyebrow pencil just as if she were going on a date. She got into her rusty old red coat with the fur collar, picked up her big net bag, nodded to the three other women who worked with her, and headed home.

Across from the Hall of Justice, she picked up a burger and a bag of fries at an all-night hash joint, cut through a dark alley to save herself a half-block, turned two corners, and let herself into the front door of the old hotel she lived in. Once it had had pretensions, not to luxury but to a superficial traveling-salesman prosperity; now even that had worn away. A little imitation marble from what had been the lobby, long since rented out to a second-hand store and a laundrette, remained in the narrow hall by the deserted desk. Its smells were those of mildew and urine and things gone sour and last year's cooking.

Emmie took the creaking elevator to her third-floor room. The smells lived there too, but to her they were the smells of home: her bed, pulled together somehow but never really made, her hot-plate with most of a can of soup still in a pan next to it on the sink, her dresser with its small cracked mirror and photographs—a tinted one of her ma and pa in a once-gilded metal frame, a couple of her sister's kids whom she hadn't seen for years, and none of Shoalts. Then there was her tv and her worn-out easy chair.

She chucked her coat down across the bed, her bag beside it. She pushed the soup over to a burner, turned it on. From beneath the sink she pulled a half-full gallon jug of muscatel. She rinsed a tumbler out and filled it. Then she kicked off her shoes, turned on the tv, and, sighing gratefully, settled herself in front of it with her glass, her hamburger, her french fries, and her jug next to her.

After a while she rescued what remained of the soup when it boiled over, and settled back again, eating it out of the hot pan with a teaspoon. She refilled the tumbler and sat there sipping. She watched an inner-city crooked-cop movie for a time, then a Groucho rerun, then something about animals in Africa or someplace. Finally an old feature film got started, all about a real pretty girl getting hired to take care of a rich man's kids in a

dark old sort of castle, and at first she found it interesting, but she was getting all loosened up and comfortable, and her mind began to wander, sometimes sorrowing momentarily for hopes half-formed and long since vanished, more often touching on more pleasant things, like talking to Mr. Monahan in the corridor or the time, many years before, when somebody'd tipped her generously and, without telling Shoalts, she'd got her wedding ring out of hock.

Gradually she became less and less aware of the tv's moving shadows and their voices, more and more conscious of the waiting in her, of her eagerness, her hunger, and her fear that, when she slept, the dream might not come to her. It never came until the wine had really taken hold, and she kept topping up her glass. Once she went to the john, which now she didn't have to share with anyone because the room next door was being used for storage, and sat there with the door open for ten or fifteen minutes, forcing herself to watch the screen, fighting off her increasing drowsiness. When her eyelids started to close in spite of everything, she shuffled back into her chair, poured her glass half-full once more, and drank it down.

Instantly the tv was forgotten. She slept. She dreamed. Abruptly, the dream came. Abruptly, she came alive within it.

Again the sky was bright and blue. Again the sun was just about to rise behind the hill. Again she felt the cool dew on the long grass that kissed her ankles, and knew that behind the hill her lover waited for her. She started forward, listening for her mother's voice calling out to her, "Emma Marie! Emma Marie!"—but there was only silence, and the soft, ardent sighing of a spring breeze around her body, and the meadowlark that she had heard before.

Then she looked down and saw that not only her feet were bare. She saw the cream-smooth skin of her breasts and belly, her flushed nipples, the auburn curls of her young, rounded mound. She knew exultantly that she was naked and a maid, and that now, now, now her lover was striding up the hill to come to her.

Her head thrown back, her long hair streaming, she began to run across the lovely grass and up the slope as though it wasn't there.

She saw him suddenly. He had stopped for an instant at the very crest. But he was not a boy.

Vast and naked, mightily muscled, bearded in his manhood, and terribly, terribly male, he towered above her—and at his back the glorious sun washed him in a red and golden light that seemed, suddenly, to be part of him.

With a wordless cry, she ran to him, and his great arms opened to her, and there in the soft, cool grass she opened to him.

## Dream Along With Me

The phone at Breedon's rang at seven minutes before three, and Breedon's nephew, the back-room bartender on the graveyard shift, put down his poker hand to answer it.

"It's Larry on the desk," he told Tom Monahan. "Says Doc Gullion just had a man call in to tell you they've got a story for you. Says it's only a couple blocks away, at that old hotel, the Simphon, but you better hurry, and to take Joe over with you."

Monahan looked ruefully at his half-empty glass of Bushmill's and his three queens. He'd raised the ante and hadn't had a chance to draw to them. "At least let's finish this one lovely hand," he protested.

Joe Carrick, from Homicide, sitting next to him, folded his own hand. "Lovely, hell!" he said. "I got nothing, not against three going in."

The two others at the table, one a long-retired sergeant who just couldn't stay away, the other an overweight ex-cop who worked for Breedon evenings, both grunted disgustedly and threw their hands in.

"Come, come!" pleaded Monahan. "Doc Gullion never tips me off except when he has something really gruesome to spoil my night. Won't anybody call me just so I can savor these few moments before going on to his unpleasantness?"

Breedon's nephew came back carrying the Bushmill's bottle. "You touch my heartstrings, Mr. Monahan," he said, "but there's nothing I can do except show my openers—" He turned over two red jacks. "—and give you one for the road, on the house."

"You'll need it if this job's going to be of a piece with Gullion's usuals," Carrick told him, hoisting himself to his feet, "you being so sensitive and all."

"Ah, it's the Irish in me," said Tom Monahan, giving his voice just the right edge of mockery.

Breedon's nephew laughed. "Yeah, and the scotch and the bourbon and the rye, and the Guinnesses between."

"To say nothing of fine wines," answered Monahan, downing his drink. "The Simphon, if its exterior speaks the truth, must be a pretty ratty sort of fleabag. Well, we can but see what Doctor Gullion has found us there."

He and Carrick left, saying they'd be back, and stepped out into the chill and dirty night, its city smells held by the still air.

The Simphon's sign was out—it looked as though it had not been lighted for endless years—and the meat wagon from the morgue was parked outside the entrance, behind a police car and a fire department rescue truck. Two or three larger engines were just revving up to leave.

"Room 317," the policeman at the door told them. "Doc Gullion said go right on up."

"I'll bet he did!" growled Carrick. "What's he got?"

The policeman shrugged. "Some old biddy got herself burned to death. Can't see why he's making such a deal about it. They get into the booze and pass out with a cigarette. Crap, it happens all the time."

As soon as they stepped out of the elevator, they smelled the burning, but it was not quite the stench of burned flesh they had expected; it had overtones that were vaguely and puzzlingly aromatic. A few of the hotel's inhabitants, most of them elderly and in oddly assorted nightclothes, some with old overcoats thrown over them as bathrobes, were clucking in the hallway, another cop riding herd on them. Tom Monahan and Carrick shooed their way through to the opened door of 317, and Monahan recognized Emmie Shoalts immediately.

He halted in the doorway, staring at her. She was dead, there in her easy chair, head thrown back, body covered by a blanket somebody had tossed over it. Directly over her, on the cracked ceiling, there was a still-spreading sooty, smoky area, with an oily look to it, like those that form above badly trimmed kerosene heaters. In front of her the tv was still posturing, though its sound had been turned off. Her hat had been stepped on and kicked into a corner; it too was dead.

Tom Monahan stared at her, shocked, abruptly saddened. It came to him that this, whatever the specific cause, was how all dreams ended, regardless of their beauty or their preciousness. And instantly he was ashamed of the thought that followed, a small, gloating thought against which even his cool cynicism was not impervious: that the dream once cherished in that poor skull was one that he would never, never, never again need to envy.

Doc Gullion was standing next to her, looking—as he always did to Monahan—like an artificially fabricated man, all cold and dry and gray, with colorless thin hair and pinpoint pupils set like small stones behind his rimless spectacles, a physician who practiced nothing of the healing art, a doctor to the dead.

"It's Emmie!" Tom Monahan said softly. "It's Emmie Shoalts."

"Christ!" Carrick exclaimed. "I saw her just tonight, swabbing down the decks back at the Hall. What the hell happened to her, Doc?"

"She burned to death."

"Cigarette?"

Doc Gullion shook his head. "You have confirmed our identification very accurately," he said. "She was indeed your Emmie Shoalts. But your idea of the cause is, I regret, in error." Suddenly he



laughed, a strange metallic sound, a tin horse neighing. "It was nothing as common as a cigarette. It was much more rare and interesting than *that*." Delicately he reached for a corner of the blanket. "That's why I had them call you, Mr. Monahan. There are only four or five cases reported every year, and nobody has any idea of how they happen, or why. Have you ever heard of the spontaneous combustion of human beings, Mr. Monahan? Nothing burns them. They *themselves* burn, from the inside out."

He pulled the blanket off, revealing the charred horror under it, charred to the bone, part of the rib cage, even a section of the spine. He laughed again. "Our Emmie's case is typical. They're usually old women, and almost always the victim is a lush." He gestured at the jug, the empty tumbler. "And nothing else is burned—see, not even the cushions of her chair. I'm sure you've read about it. Charles Fort wrote about several of them in his books."

Tom Monahan did not move. The blood had drained abruptly from his face, leaving its capillaries standing out against its pallor. He stared at the awful thing that had been Emmie Shoalts and moaned almost imperceptibly.

"Besides," Doc Gullion said, "quite typically there is no evidence of pain. See her face, Mr. Monahan? Why, she looks happy as a clam!" And once again he laughed.

Tom Merton Monahan stood there in the sudden cold, the sudden silence, utterly isolated in a new and yet hideously familiar vulnerability. His world had changed its face completely. Now it was ancient beyond counting, and dark with mysteries, and terrible. For now he knew that even though Emmie Shoalts had perished, her dream had not mercifully died with her. He *knew*, incontrovertibly, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that there in that mean room, Emma Marie's long-awaited lover had taken her.

"My God!" he whispered. "Oh, my God! Semele!"

"How's that?" Carrick looked at him anxiously.

Doc Gullion answered him. "It's an old

legend. Greek. Zeus came down off his Olympus, and screwed this Greek girl named Semele, and burned her up. Hot stuff, those gods. Handel made an opera out of it." He gestured to two morgue attendants who had brought up a stretcher and a body bag. "Somehow I can't see a god coming down here and picking on old Emmie, but who knows? It could be as good an explanation as any, Mr. Monahan—except that once in a while it happens to men too."

"It *what*?" Tom Monahan spoke through the terror rising in his throat.

For a moment, Doc Gullion eyed him coldly, calculatingly. "It happens to some men," he said. "Much more rarely than to women, but still it does. Maybe the Greeks can tell you why."

Then he went about winding up his business with the morgue attendants.

Tom Monahan followed Carrick silently down the hallway. Saying not a word, he stood beside him in the elevator. He went with him out into the street, the night. He started suddenly, uncontrollably, when Carrick touched his shoulder with a friendly hand.

"Tom, Tom," Carrick said, full of concern. "Boy, you're all shook up. It's always tough, but hell! In this business you just got to get used to it. Come on back to Bredon's. A couple more shots and a few winners and you'll be as good as new."

Monahan shook his head. Above him in the night, around him, subtly behind his back, nightmares mewled and screamed, the dreams that lived in darkness, that haunted sleep.

"I—I need a walk!" he stammered, and Carrick heard the edge of hysteria in his voice.

"Okay, chum," he said unhappily. "Maybe you know best." He turned away.

Tom Monahan waited for a minute while the nightmares surged around him, lapping at his feet. Then, as Orestes fled the Furies, he fled through the city's streets, never quite running, always curbing the impulse at the final moment. He fled from that night-world newly seen, and from himself. Minutes went by, and blocks of buildings, and street-lights. He climbed steep sidewalks. He panted, unconscious of his panting.

Finally he recognized the building. It was on his right, the small old church of Notre Dame des Victoires, built years ago by and for the Frenchmen of the city. He ran up its steps, and at the door he paused, certain that the handle would never, at that hour, open for him, not daring yet to try. He fell to his knees in front of it and, rocking back and forth, he crossed himself, conscious only of his mind crying out its desperate, despairing plea for rescue from the unknown and the unknowable, its plea for refuge: *Hail Mary, full of grace ...* 17

# MY MEMORIES

## THE TWILIGHT ZONE'S CREATOR REMEMBERS A TIME WHEN TWO SIMPLE WORDS TRANSFORMED THE WORLD.

*Rod served in the 511 Parachute Regiment during World War II. When he wrote this, he was a young, newly-returned-home soldier. It is admittedly unsophisticated and ingenuous, but at Christmas there's always room for a little extra sentiment. And I suggest that the story was not only addressed to the men of the 511th, but to all of us who approach this holiday season with hope and faith in the future.*

—Carol Serling

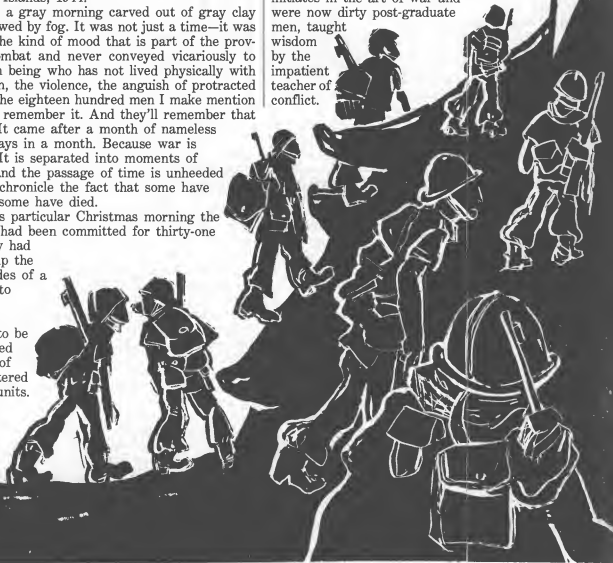
I'm writing this for a very limited audience—the eighteen hundred members of the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment who spent a Christmas on a God-forsaken mountain top on Leyte, the Philippine Islands, 1944.

It was a gray morning carved out of gray clay and shadowed by fog. It was not just a time—it was a mood—the kind of mood that is part of the province of combat and never conveyed vicariously to the human being who has not lived physically with the tension, the violence, the anguish of protracted war. But the eighteen hundred men I make mention of—they'll remember it. And they'll remember that morning. It came after a month of nameless dateless days in a month. Because war is like that. It is separated into moments of survival, and the passage of time is unheeded except to chronicle the fact that some have lived and some have died.

On this particular Christmas morning the Regiment had been committed for thirty-one days. They had marched up the jungled sides of a mountain to "mop up" what was supposed to be the defeated remnants of some scattered Japanese units.

The remnants turned out to be a division in force and intact. The 511th got baptised in a ceremony that took one month of daily battle and desperate and constant hunger, until—on the twenty-fourth of December—it had finally defeated its brave and desperate enemy to push on past the last block and survey Ormoc Bay on the other side of the mountain.

A long line of men rested along the sides of the jungle trail—gray jump suits that blended with gray-covered beards; tired inward-looking eyes that reflected nothing but the fog and the grayness of the morning. We had come up as fresh initiates in the art of war and were now dirty post-graduate men, taught wisdom by the impatient teacher of conflict.



# MOST CHRISTMAS

BY ROD SERLING

We lay there with a resignation to the wet, to fatigue, and to a neutral awareness that we breathed and could walk and that ten miles down the mountain there would be sleep and food. A nineteen-year-old Second Looie got up to his feet and spoke through the first beard he'd ever worn.

"All right—on your feet. Let's move out."

We rose—the packs, the ammo belts, the weaponry, all fused to us like extensions of our bodies, the weight so constant that it was all part of us—and we started to plod slowly through the ankle-deep mud ... a long line of dirty, bearded samenesses.

And then somebody far up the line stopped dead, and there was a whispered message that went down past the ranks. Each man froze and held his breath because any whisper passed down from up front meant a machine gun or a pocket of Japanese

or a mined trail or any one of a dozen other reminders that there was a war here and we were a part of it. But this particular message was nothing less than an incredible jar to memory—a reminder of a different sort. The whispered voice of the man in front of me said, "It's Christmas."

I continued to lift my feet up, one after the other, weighed down by the fifty pounds of equipment attached to a sparse one-hundred-pound frame, and suddenly I wasn't aware of the cold rain. I wasn't conscious of the mud that clung. I gave no thought to the sick little ache, deep inside the gut, that had been with us for so many days. Someone had just transformed the world. Two words had just reminded us that this was the Earth and this was mankind and that people still lived and that we did, also. "It's Christmas."

And then a scratchy, discordant, monotone voice way up front started to sing, "Oh Come All Ye Faithful." Somebody else picked it up and then we all sang. We sang as we walked through the

mud. We sang as we led the wounded by the hand and carried the litters and looked back on the row of handmade crosses left behind.

We sang, "Oh Come All Ye Faithful." It had come, indeed—the Holy Day. The day of all days. It was Christmas. 17



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# Lost and Found

by  
Connie Willis

YOU'LL KNOW THE FUTURE'S DRAWING TO AN END  
WHEN THE PAST BEGINS TURNING UP.

Is it the end of the world?" Megan asked. "Losing your cup, I mean?" Finney had come up to the Reverend Mr. Davidson's study to see if he might have left it there, and had found Megan at her father's desk, pasting bits of cotton wool to a sheet of blue paper.

"No, of course not," Finney said. "It's only annoying. It's the third time this week I've lost it." He pulled the desk drawers open one by one. The top two were empty. The bottom was full of construction paper. He limped around the desk to a chair and dropped down onto it.

He watched Megan. The top two buttons of her blouse were unbuttoned, and she was leaning forward over the paper, so Finney had a nice view of her bosom, though she was unaware of it. She was making a botch of the pasting, daubing the brown glue onto the cotton instead of the paper. The glue leaked through the cotton wool when she pounded it down with the flat of her hand, and sticky bits of it clung to her palm. The face of an angel and the body of a woman, and she could not paste as well as her church school class. It was her father the Reverend Mr. Davidson's voice one heard when she spoke, his learned speech patterns and quotations of scripture, but the effect was strong enough that one forgot she recited them without understanding. Finney constantly had to remind himself that she was only a child, even if she was eighteen, that her words were children's words with children's meanings, inspired though they might sound.

"Why did you ask if it were the end of the world?" Finney said.

"Because then you might find your cup. 'Of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' When is Daddy coming home?"

Finney's foot began to throb. "When he's finished with his business."

"I hope he comes soon," Megan said. "There are only the three of us till he comes."

"Yes," Finney said, thinking of the other teacher, Mrs. Andover. A fine threesome to hold down the fort: a middle-aged spinster, an eighteen-year-old child, and a thirty-year-old ... what? Church school teacher, he told himself grimly. His foot began to ache, worse than ever. Lame church school teacher.

"I hope he comes soon," Megan said again.

"So do I. What are you making?"

"Sheep," Megan said. She held up the paper. White bits of the cotton wool were stuck randomly to the blue paper. They looked like clouds in a blue sky. "My class is going to make them after tea."

"Where are your children then?" Finney said, trying to keep his voice casual.

She looked at him with round blue eyes. "We were playing a game outside before. About sheep. So I came in to make some."

St. John's at End sat on a round island in the middle of the River End. The river on both sides was so shallow one could walk across it, but it was possible to drown in only a foot of water, wasn't it? Finney nearly had.

"I'll find them," he said.

"The lost shall be found," Megan said, and patted a bit of wool with her hand.

He collided with Mrs. Andover on the stairs. "Megan's let her class out with no one to watch them," he said rapidly. "She's in there pasting and the children are God knows where. My boys are out, but they won't think to watch for them."

Mrs. Andover turned and walked slowly down the stairs ahead of him, as if she were purposely impeding his progress. "The children are perfectly all right," she said calmly. She stopped at the foot of the stairs and faced Finney, her arms folded across her matronly bosom. "I set one of the older girls to watch them," she said. "She has been spying for me all week, seeing that nothing happens to them."

Finney was a little taken aback. Mrs. Andover was so much the Oxford tour guide, prim blue skirt and sturdy walking shoes. He would have thought a word like "spying" beneath her.

"You needn't worry," she said, mistaking Finney's surprise for concern. "I'm paying her. Two pounds the week. Money's the root of all loyalty, isn't it then?"

"Sometimes," Finney said, even more surprised. "At any rate, I think I'll go make sure of them."

Mrs. Andover lifted an eyebrow and said, "Whatever you think best." She turned at the landing and went into the sanctuary. Finney started out the side door and then stopped, wondering what Mrs. Andover could possibly be doing in there. She had not had a pocket torch with her, and the sanctuary was nearly pitch black. He hesitated, then turned painfully around, using the stone lintel for support, and followed her inside.

At first he could not see her. The spaces where the stained glass windows had been were boarded up with sheets of plywood. Only the little arch at the top was left open to let in light. The windows had been the first to go, of course, even before the government had decided that a state church should by definition help support the state.





## Lost and Found

The windows had been sold because the cults could afford to buy them, and the churches needed the money. The government had seen at once that the churches should be a source of income as well as grace, and the systematic sacking had begun. The great cathedrals like York and Salisbury were long since stripped bare, and it would not be long before it reached St. John's.

St. John's will be crammed with spies, Finney thought. The Reverend Mr. Davidson, Mrs. Andover's girl, the government spies, and myself, all working undercover in one way or another. We shall have to sell the pews to make room for everyone. He stood perfectly still, balancing on his good foot. He let his eyes adjust, waiting to get his bearings from the marble angel that always shone dimly near the doors. The little curved triangles of sky were thick with gray clouds that absorbed the light like Megan's cotton wool absorbed the brown glue.

He caught a glimpse of white to the left, but it was not the angel. It was Mrs. Andover's white blouse. She was bending over one of the pews. "I say," he called out cheerfully, "this would make a good hiding place, wouldn't it?"

She straightened abruptly.

"What are you looking for?" Finney said, making his way toward her with the pew backs for awkward crutches.

"Your cup," Mrs. Andover said nervously. "I heard you tell Megan you'd lost it again. I thought one of the children might have hidden it."

Mrs. Andover was full of surprises today. Finney did not really know her at all, had not really thought about her presence though she had come after he did. Finney had ticketed her from the start as a schoolmistress spinster and not thought any more about her. Now he was not certain he should have dismissed her so easily. "What are you doing here?" he said aloud.

"I was not aware the sanctuary was off limits," she snapped. Finney was amazed. She looked as properly guilty as any of his upper form boys.

"I didn't mean to be rude," he said. "I was only wondering how you came to be here at St. John's."

She looked even guiltier, which was ridiculous. What had she been doing in here?

"One might wonder the same thing about you, Mr. Finney." She looked coldly at his stub of a foot. "You apparently came here through violent means."

Very good, thought Finney. "A shark bit it off," he said. "In the River End. I was wading."

"It is no wonder you are so concerned about the children then. Perhaps you'd better go see to them." She started past him. He put out his hand to stop her, not even sure of what he wanted to say.

She stopped stock still. "I shouldn't question other people's fitness to teach, Mr. Finney," she said. "A lame man and a half-witted girl. The Reverend Mr. Davidson is apparently not in a position to pick and choose who represents his church."

Finney thought of Reverend Davidson bending over him, his shoes wet and his trousers splattered with water and Finney's blood. He had propped Finney's arm around his neck and then, as if Finney were one of his children, picked him up and carried him out of the water. "Either that," Finney said, "or he has Jesus's unfortunate affinity for idiots and cripples. Which are you, Mrs. Andover?"

She shook off his hand and brushed angrily past him.

"What were you looking for, Mrs. Andover?"

Finney said. "What exactly did you expect to find?"

"Hullo," Megan said as if or cue. "Look what I've just found."

She was holding a heavy leather notebook, full of yellowing pages. "I was looking for some nice black construction paper to make shadows with," she said. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." I thought how nice it would be if each of the sheep had a nice black shadow and I looked in the bottom drawer of Daddy's desk, where he always keeps the paper, and this is all that was in there. Not any green at all." She handed the notebook to Finney.

"Green shadows?" he said absently, thinking of the drawer he had pulled out, full of colored paper.

"Of course not," Megan said. "Green pastures. 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.'"

He wasn't really listening to her. He was looking at the notebook. It was made of a soft, dark brown leather, now stiffening at the edges and even peeling off in curling layers at one corner. He started to open the cover. Mrs. Andover made a sound. Finney looked over Megan's bright blond head at her. Her face was lined with triumph.

"Is it Daddy's?" Megan said.

"I don't know," Finney said. Megan's sticky fingers had marked the cover with bits of cotton and stuck the first two pages to the cover. Finney looked at the close handwriting on the pages, written in faded blue ink. He gently pried the glued pages from the cover.

"Is it?" Megan said insistently.

"No," Finney said finally. "It appears to belong to T. E. Lawrence. How did it get in your father's desk?"

"Megan," Mrs. Andover said, "it's time for the children to come in. Go and fetch them."

"Is it time for tea then?" Megan said.

**There would be no question of cutting off a foot this time. They would murder him, and they would find a scripture to say over him as they did it.**

Finney looked at his watch. "Not yet," he said. "It's only three."

"We'll have it early today," Mrs. Andover said. "Tell them to come in for their tea."

Megan ran out. Mrs. Andover came over to stand beside Finney. He said, "It looks like a rough draft of a book or something. Like a manuscript. What do you think?"

"I don't need to think," Mrs. Andover said. "I know what it is. It's the manuscript copy of Lawrence's book, his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. He wrote it after he became famous as Lawrence of Arabia, before he ... succumbed to his unhappiness. It was lost in Reading Railway Station in 1919."

"How did it get here?"

"Why don't you tell me?" Mrs. Andover said.

Finney looked at her, amazed. She was staring at him as if he might actually know something about it. "I wasn't even born in 1919. I've never even been in Reading Station."

"It wasn't in the desk this morning when I searched it."

"Oh, really," Finney said, "and what were you looking for in Reverend Davidson's desk? Green construction paper?"

"I've set the tea out," Megan said from the doorway, "only I can't find any cups."

"I forgot," Finney said. "Jesus was fond of tax collectors, too, wasn't he?"

**F**inney went into the kitchen on the excuse of looking for something better than a paper cup for his tea. Instead he stood at the sink and stared at the wall. If the brown leather notebook were truly a lost manuscript of Lawrence's book, and if Mrs. Andover was one of the state's spies, as he was almost certain she was, Reverend Davidson would lose his church for withholding treasures from the state. That was not the worst of it. His name and picture would be in all the papers, and that would mean an end to the undercover rescue work getting the children out of the cults—and an end to the children.

"Take care of her, Finney," he had said before he left. "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." And he had let a government spy loose in the church, had let her roam about taking inventory. Finney gripped the linoleum drainboard.

Perhaps she was not from the government.

Even if she was, she might be here for a totally different reason. Finney was a reporter, but he was hardly here for a good story. He was here because he had nearly bled to death in the End, and Davidson had pulled him out. Perhaps he had rescued Mrs. Andover, too, had brought her into the fold like all the rest of his lost lambs.

Finney was not even sure why he was here. He told himself he was staying until his foot healed, until Davidson found another teacher for the upper form boys, until Davidson got safely back from the north. He did not think it was because he was afraid, although of course he was afraid. They would know he was a reporter by now, they would know he had been working undercover, investigating the cults. There would be no question of cutting off a foot for attempting to escape this time. They would murder him, and they would find a scripture to say over him as they did it. "If thy right hand offend, cut it off." He had thought he never wanted to hear scripture again. Perhaps that was why he stayed. To hear Megan prattling her sweet and senseless scripture was like a balm. And what was St. John's to Mrs. Andover? A balm? A refuge? Or an enemy to be conquered and then sacked?

Megan came in, knelt down beside the cupboard below the sink, and began banging about.

"What are you looking for?" Finney said.

"Your cup, of course. Mrs. Andover found some others, but not yours."

"Megan," he said seriously, kneeling beside her, "what do you know about Mrs. Andover?"

"She's a spy," Megan said from inside the cupboard.

"Why do you think that?"

"Daddy said so. He gave her all the treasures. The marble angel and the choir screen and all the candlesticks. 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's.' It isn't there," she said, pulling her head out of the cupboard. "Only pots." She handed Finney a rusted iron skillet and two banged-about aluminum pots. Finney put them carefully back into the empty cupboard, trying to think how best to ask Megan why she thought Mrs. Andover had stayed on. Her answer might be nonsense, of course, or it might be inspired. It might be scripture.

"She thinks we didn't give her all the treasures," Megan volunteered suddenly, on her knees beside him. "She asks me all the time where Daddy hid them."

"And what do you tell her?"

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths corrupt and thieves break in and steal."

"Good girl," Finney said, and lifted her up. "What's an old cup? We'll find it later." He took

## Lost and Found

her hand and led her into tea.

Mrs. Andover was already being mother, pouring hot milk and tea into a Styrofoam cup with a half-circle bitten out of it. She handed it to Finney. "Did you and Megan find your cup?" she asked.

"No," Finney said. "But then we aren't experts like you, are we?"

Mrs. Andover did not answer him. She poured out Megan's tea. "When is your father coming back, Megan?" she said.

"Not soon enough," Finney snapped. "Are you that eager to arrest him? Or is it hanging you're after, for treasonable offenses?" He thought of Davidson, crouched by a gate somewhere, waiting for the child to be bundled out to him. "If the cults don't murder him, the government will; is that the game then? How can he possibly win a game like that?"

"The game's not finished yet," Megan said.

"What?" Finney slopped tea all over his trousers.

"Go and finish your game," Mrs. Andover said. "Take the children with you. You needn't come in till it's ended." Now that Finney was looking for it, he saw her nod to a tall girl with a large bosom. The girl nodded back and went out after the children. What else had he missed because he wasn't looking for it?

"It's a game of Megan's," Mrs. Andover said to Finney. "One child's the shepherd, and he must get all the sheep into the fold by putting them inside a ring drawn on the ground. When he's got them all inside the ring, then it's bang!—the end—and all adjourn for tea and cake."

"Bang! The end," said Finney. "Tea and cakes for everyone. I wish it were as simple as that."

"Perhaps you should join one of the cults," Mrs. Andover said.

Finney looked up sharply from his tea.

"They are always preaching the end, aren't they? When it's coming and to whom. Lists of who's to be saved and who's to be left to his own devices. Dates and places and timetables."

"They're wrong," Finney said. "It's supposed to come like a thief in the night, so no one will see it coming."

"I doubt there's a thief could get past me without my knowing it."

"Yes, I forgot," said Finney. "'It takes a thief to catch a thief.' Isn't that one of Megan's scriptures?"

She looked thoughtful. "Aren't the lost supposed to be safely gathered into the fold before the end can come?"

"Ah, yes," said Finney, "but the good shepherd never does specify just who those lost ones are he's so bent on finding. Perhaps he has a list of his own, and when all the people on it are safely inside some circle he's drawn on the ground..."

"Or perhaps we don't understand at all," Mrs. Andover said dreamily. "Perhaps the lost are not people at all, but things. Perhaps it's they that are being gathered in before the end. T.E. Lawrence was a lost soul, wasn't he?"

"I'd hardly call Lawrence of Arabia lost," Finney said. "He seemed to know his way round the Middle East rather well."

"He hired a man to flog him, did you know that? He would have had to be well and truly lost to have done that." She looked up suddenly at Finney. "If something else turned up, something valuable, that would prove the end was coming, wouldn't it?"

"It would prove something," Finney said. "I'm not certain what."

"Where exactly is your Reverend Mr. Davidson?" she asked, almost offhand, as if she could catch him by changing the subject.

He is out rescuing the lost, dear lady, while you sit here seducing admissions out of me. A thief can't sneak past me either. "In London, of course," Finney said. "Pawning the crown jewels and hiding the money in Swiss bank accounts."

"Quite possibly," Mrs. Andover said. "Perhaps he should think about returning to St. John's. He is in a good deal of trouble."

Finney pulled his class in and sat them down in the crypt. "Tisn't fair," one of the taller boys said. "The game was still going. It wasn't very nice of you to pull us in like that." He kicked at the gilded toe of a fifteenth-century wool merchant.

"I quite agree," Finney said, which remark caused all of them to sit up and look at him, even the kicker. "It was not fair. Neither was it fair for me to have had to drink my tea from a paper cup."

"It isn't our bloody fault you lost the cup," the boy said sulkily.

"That would be quite true, if indeed the cup were lost. The Holy Grail has been lost for centuries and never found, and that is certainly no one's bloody fault. But my cup is not lost forever, and you are going to find it." He tried to sound angry, so they would look and not play. "I want you to search every nook and cranny of this church, and if you find the cup—" Here was the tricky bit, just the right casual tone. "—or anything else interesting, bring it straightaway to me." He paused and then said, as if he had just thought of it, "I'll give fifty pence for every treasure."



The children scattered like players in a game. Finney hobbled up the stairs after them and stood in the side door. The younger children were down by the water, and Mrs. Andover was standing near them.

Two of the boys plummeted past Finney and up the stairs to the study. "Don't—" Finney said, but they were already past him. By the time he had managed the stairs, the boys had strewn open every drawer of the desk. They were tumbling colored paper out of the bottom drawer, trying to see what was under it.

"It isn't there," one of the boys said, and Finney's heart caught.

"What isn't?"

"Your cup. This is where we hid it. This morning."

"You must be mistaken," he said, and led them firmly down the stairs. Halfway down, Mrs. Andover's girl burst in at them. "She says you are to come at once," she said breathlessly.

Finney released the boys. "You two can redeem yourselves by finding my cup." And then, as they escaped down the stairs to the crypt, he shouted, "And stay out of the study."

Mrs. Andover was standing by the End, watching the children and Megan wade knee-deep in the clear water. The sun had come out. Finney could see the flash of sunlight off Megan's hair.

"They're playing a game," Mrs. Andover said without looking at him. "It's an old nursery rhyme about how bad King John lost his clothes in the Wash. The children stand in a circle, and when the rhyme's done, they fall down in the water. Megan stepped on something when she went down. She cut her foot."

Water and blood and Davidson reaching out for Finney's hand. "No!" Finney had cried, "not my hand, too!" Davidson had started to say something and Finney had flailed away from him like a landed fish, afraid it would be holy scripture. But he had said, "The cults did this to you, didn't

they?" in a voice that had no holiness in it at all, and Finney had collapsed gratefully into his arms.

"Is she hurt?" he said, blinded by the sun and the memory.

"It was just a scratch," Mrs. Andover said. "King John did lose his clothes. In a battle in 1215. His army was fighting in a muddy estuary of the Wash when a tide came in and knocked everyone under. He lost his crown, too."

"And it was never found," Finney said, knowing what was coming.

"Not until now."

"Megan!" Finney shouted. "Come here right now!"

She ran up out of the water, her bare legs dripping wet. In her hand was a rusty circle that looked more like a tin lid than a crown. He did not have the slightest doubt that it was what Mrs. Andover said, the crown of a king dead eight hundred years.

"Give me the crown, Megan," Finney said.

"Behold I come quickly. Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," she said, handing it to Finney.

Finney scratched through the encrusted minerals to the definite scrape of metal. It was thinner in several spots. Finney poked his little finger into one of the indentations and through it, making a round hole.

"Those are for the jewels," Megan said.

"What makes you think that?" Mrs. Andover said. "Have you seen any jewels?"

"All crowns have jewels," Megan said. Finney handed the crown back to her, and she put it on. Finney looked at the sky behind Megan's head. The clouds had pulled back from a little circlet of blue over the church. "Can I go back now?" Megan said. "The game's almost done."

"This is the End," Finney said, watching her walk fearlessly into the water. "Not the Wash."

"Nor is it the Reading Railway Station," Mrs. Andover said. "Nevertheless."

"The water's perfectly clear. I would have seen it. Someone would have seen it. It can't have lain there since 1215."

"It could have been put there," Mrs. Andover said. "After the jewels had been removed."

"So could the colored paper," he said without thinking, "after the book was taken out."

"What about the paper?" Mrs. Andover said.

"It's back in the drawer where Megan found the book. I saw it."

"You might have put it back."

"But I didn't."

"Perhaps," she said thoughtfully, "the pious Reverend Davidson has come back without telling us."

## Lost and Found

"For what purpose?" Finney said, losing his temper altogether. "To play some incredible game of hide and seek? To race about his church scattering priceless manuscripts and ancient crowns like prizes for us to find? What would we have to find to convince you he's innocent. The Holy Grail?"

"Yes," Mrs. Andover said coldly, and started back toward the church.

"Where are you going?" Finney shouted.

"To see for myself this miracle of the colored paper."

"King John was a pretty lost soul, too," he shouted at her back. "Perhaps he's the last on the list. Perhaps it'll all go bang before you even get to the church."

But she safely made it to the vestry door and inside, and Finney hobbled after her, suddenly afraid of what his boys might have found now.

Mrs. Andover was staring bleakly into the open drawer as Finney had done, as if it held some answer. Finney felt a pang of pity for her, standing there in her sturdy shoes, believing in no one, alone in the enemy camp. He put his hand out to her shoulder, but she flinched away from his touch. There was a sudden clatter on the stairs, and the two boys exploded into the room with Finney's cup.

"Look what we found!" one of them said.

"And you'll never guess what else," the other said, tumbling his words out. "After you said we shouldn't look in here, we went down to the sanctuary, only it was too dark to see properly. So then we went into where we all have tea, and there were no good hiding places at all, so we said to ourselves, Where would a cup logically be? And the answer, of course, was in the kitchen." He stopped to take a breath. "We pulled everything out of the cupboard, but it was just pots."

"And an iron skillet," Finney said.

"So we were putting them all back when we saw something else, a big old metal sort of thing rather like a cup, and your cup was inside it!" He handed the china cup triumphantly to Finney.

"Where is it?" Mrs. Andover said, as if it were an effort to speak. "This big old metal cup?"

"In the kitchen. We'll fetch it if you like."

"Please do."

The boys dashed out. Finney turned to look at her. "It wasn't there. Megan and I looked. You know what it is, don't you?" Finney said, his heart beating sickeningly fast. It was the way he had felt before he lost his foot, when he saw the ax coming down.

"Yes," she said.

"It's what you've been waiting for," he said accusingly. "It's the proof you said you wanted."

"Yes," she said, her lip trembling. "Only I didn't know what it would mean."

The boys were already racketing up the stairs. They burst in the door with it. For one awful endless moment, the steel blade falling against the sound of his own heart, louder than the drone of scripture, Finney prayed that it was an old metal cup.

The boys set it on the desk. It was badly dented from endless hidings and secretings and journeys, tarnished like an old spoon. It shone like the cup of the sky.

"Is it a treasure?" asked the boy who had stolen Finney's cup, looking at their faces. "Do we get the fifty pence?"

"It is the Holy Grail," Mrs. Andover said, putting her hands on it like a benediction.

"I thought it was lost forever."

"It was," she said. "I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

Finney rubbed the back of his hand across his dry mouth. "I think we'd better get the children inside," he said.

He sent the boys downstairs to put the kettle on for tea. Mrs. Andover stood by the desk, holding onto the Grail as if she were afraid of what would happen if she let go.

"It isn't so bad once it's over," Finney said. "What you think is the end isn't always, and it turns out better than you dreamed."

She set the Grail down gently and turned to him.

"It is only the last moment before the blade falls that is hard to bear," he said.

"I have never told you," Mrs. Andover said, her eyes filling with tears, "how sorry I am about your foot." She fumbled for a handkerchief.


"It doesn't matter," Finney said. "At any rate, the way things seem to be going, it might just turn up."

She smiled at that, dabbing her eyes with the handkerchief, but when they went down the stairs, she clung to Finney's arm as if she were the one who was lame. Finney sent her into the kitchen to set out the tea things and then went down to the edge of the End to bring the children in.

"Is Daddy here?" Megan said, dancing along beside him with one hand on her crown to keep it from falling off. "Is that why we're having tea again?"

"No," Finney said. "But he's coming. He'll be here soon."

"Surely I come quickly," Megan said, and ran inside.

Finney looked at the sky. Above the church the clouds peeled back from the blue like the edges of a scroll. Finney shut and barred the double doors to the sanctuary. He bolted the side door on the stairs and wedged a folding chair under the lock. Then he went in to tea. 

# Ghost Story



PETER STRAUB'S NOVEL ABOUT A SHAPE-CHANGING DEMONESS HAS UNDERGONE SOME SHAPE-CHANGES OF ITS OWN ON THE WAY TO THE SCREEN. TZ'S ROBERT MARTIN COVERS THE TRANSFORMATION.

Nothing strikes literate moviegoers with such profound trepidation as the film adaptation of a novel that they look upon with great affection. This is particularly so among lovers of macabre literature—not because they're so sensitive, but because they've been sinned against so very often. Poe and Lovecraft would undoubtedly weep if they saw the films attributed to them; unfortunately, they aren't around to defend themselves, or even to collect option money. But an author need not be dead to fall victim to infidels from Los Angeles. The two contemporary writers of macabre fiction whose work most frequently reaches the big screen, Richard Matheson and Stephen King, have found that the best defense is to write their own screenplays.

## The Novelist

Even without decades of ill precedent, the task of adapting Peter Straub's *Ghost Story* would seem a formidable one, due to the sheer size and intricate structure of the novel. Though Straub began writing *Ghost Story* shortly after his third novel, *Julia*, was bought for filming (to become the lackluster *Haunting of Julia*), he acknowledges that he had little thought of possible film sales in writing the book—a fact that's certainly obvious in the reading of it.

Straub's *Ghost Story*, though replete with flashbacks, nevertheless tells a simple tale of revenge from a dark beyond. Central to the story are five elderly gentlemen, Sears James, Ricky Hawthorne, John Jeffrey, Ed Wanderley, and Lewis Benedikt, all of whom are haunted by memories of a tragic night a half-century before in their native town of Milburn, a quiet community in upstate New York. When Wanderley dies under strange circumstances, the Society members come to suspect that the evil of that night still lives, and the remaining members institute the practice of telling weekly horror tales, each in their turn. The one story that no member dares to recite is the story of that night, the story of the death of Eva Galli. After a year has passed, the haunted men decide to send for Wanderley's nephew, Don Wanderley, a writer of supernatural fiction, in the hope that he might be able to help them lay the ghost of Galli to rest.

That is merely the starting point for a story of tremendous scope which encompasses vengeful spirits, geometries of love well beyond the simple triangles, cattle mutilations, meditations upon aging and the fragility of life, and a shape-shifting were-creature who serves as the archetypal Beast from the Id. Certainly the most remarkable attribute of the novel is that all of

# Ghost Story

these elements are elegantly supported by the narrative and lead to a conclusion of truly operatic proportions.

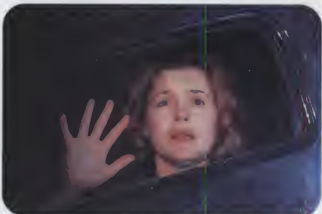
The diversity of the book is explained by its origins; as Straub explains it, the novel started as a kind of literary experiment. "I wanted the novel to simply grow out of stories that several people would tell each other," he says. "My thoughts took a number of misdirections, but at the start I knew that I wanted to adapt stories from several great writers of the past: Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux,' Henry James's 'The Turn of the Screw,' and Poe's 'House of Usher.' The first thing I did was derive the names of the Chowder Society members, and as soon as I thought of their names, I immediately had an idea of their characters. I subsequently wrote the Hawthorne story, which was told by Ricky Hawthorne, and the James story, told by Sears James, but I found that the stories, meant simply to introduce the book, were likely to take up half of a very long book, and I was straining to make the connections between them. So I removed the Hawthorne story and never did write my version of the Poe. From then on, I had virtually the entire plot set up for me, though I didn't know it at the time. Only gradually did I come to see how Gregory and Fenny Bate, the two James-inspired characters, would come back into the story."

Straub acknowledges a major debt to the book's final shape to his friend Stephen King. "I met him for the first time while I was in the middle of *Ghost Story*," says Straub. "We spent a lot of time together, and certain aspects of his character certainly influenced me. But I was also influenced by *Salem's Lot*. That book helped me see how I could organize a lot of characters; it was like a map of how to do that, and I quickly appropriated the map."

When Straub was advised of Universal Pictures' purchase of the book immediately after its pre-publication paperback auction, he greeted the news with surprised pleasure and a certain amount of concern. Straub is a great movie fan—our chat was frequently punctuated by tangential discussions of films—and he was well aware that *Ghost Story* could either be



Don Wanderley tells the others of Alma Mobley (Alice Krigge), a temptress who led his brother to his doom.



The Chowder Society members share a secret: their complicity in the accidental death fifty years before of beautiful Eva Gall (also played by Alice Krigge), drowned in the back seat of a submerged car.

stripped down to a jack-in-the-box spook story or, without careful pruning, become a sprawling hodgepodge.

## The Director

When we talked with *Ghost Story*'s director, John Irvin, it was against a background of music—multilayered, percussive, frantic but elegant, the sound of an ethereal party. "Yes, it's a good rich sound, isn't it?" Irvin said in accepting our compliments on the score. "It was composed by Phillipe Sarde for an eighty-five-piece orchestra. The particular section you're hearing now is from a scene where a couple is running back to their apartment to make love."

The quality of the score is one more indication that Universal has attempted, with *Ghost Story*, to make the top-flight horror-novel adaptation that many expected, and failed to find, in *The Shining*. Whether the enterprise succeeds depends largely on the skill of the studio's chosen director.

Irvin, who began his career in British television, has a reputation in the U.S. based primarily upon two previous translations from novel to film, John LeCarre's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, filmed for the BBC and televised here via PBS, and his first feature film, based upon Frederick Forsythe's *Dogs of War*.

*Dogs of War* opened earlier this year to strong positive response among critics, excellent word-of-mouth, and disappointing box office returns, a problem Irvin suspects may be due to the film's ad campaign. "I think that perhaps if it had been presented to the public as something more than a war story, had there been more suggestion of the complexity of the film, it might have found its audience," he says. Indeed, it is Irvin's way of



In the tiny upstate New York town of Milburn, the elderly members of the Chowder Society gather with young Don Wanderley (Craig Wasson) and Stella Hawthorne (Patricia Neal) after the mysterious death of Wanderley's twin brother.





That winter the four are threatened by apparitions of the dead woman (sculpted by effects wizard Dick Smith).

handling the complexity of the material in Forsythe's and LeCarre's novels that suggests he is just the man to undertake *Ghost Story*.

For Irvin, his involvement with *Ghost Story* is a deliberate attempt to counterbalance the political concerns of his two previous films. "I started in English television, which often has a very dark, fantastic side to it," says Irvin, "and I wanted to get away from the international intrigue and physical violence."

Prior to accepting the assignment and in the course of developing the screenplay, Irvin never read more than a few pages of Straub's novel. "I read Larry Cohen's script, and Larry had the book so well imprinted on this mind that I felt I could be more helpful by asking the right questions . . . and I had a pretty good idea of the sort of movie that I wanted to make. Subsequently I did read the book, and it had a feeling of cosmic evil, from outside any of the characters, that I very much wanted to get away from.

"Early on I had said to Larry, 'One: I believe in ghosts; I think I've once seen one. And two: I think the pain and evil that we do to each other is quite enough to create a ghost, and that the evil in the world is a consequence of people's actions.' I felt that, within



Town mayor Ed Wanderley (Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.) is the first to fall victim to the Gaili curse.



Contemplating his friend's fate, Dr. John Jaffrey (Melvyn Douglas) has forebodings of his own impending death.



A strangely menacing little boy (Lance Holcomb), enslaved by Gaili's spirit, is found lurking in the house where she once lived.



Lawyer Sears James (John Houseman) meets with an accident when he finds an unexpected passenger in the back seat of his car.

# Ghost Story



As winter deepens, the remaining men are haunted by visions of the malevolent spirit that was Eva Galli and Alma Mobley . . .

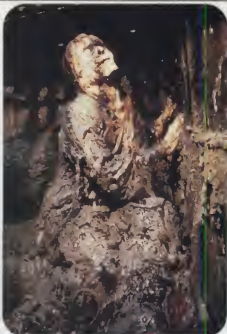


. . . and law partner Ricky Hawthorne (Fred Astaire) falls prey to terrifying dreams.

those guidelines, we could bring out something quite original and credible."

## The Screenwriter

Larry Cohen, *Ghost Story's* screenwriter, takes the credit "Lawrence D. Cohen" on his films, which serves to distinguish him from Larry Cohen the director-screenwriter, responsible for such potboilers as *It's Alive* and *Full Moon High*. Cohen began his career as a New York film and theater critic, eventually bridging the gap to Hollywood through assignments with fellow New Yorkers Martin Scorsese and Brian De Palma. For the former, he served as production executive on *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, and for De Palma he wrote the screenplay adaptation of Stephen King's *Carrie*. Cohen is an enthusiastic reader of horror fiction, particularly of King's work, and his reaction to the *Ghost Story* assignment is simply expressed. "I was chomping at the bit to get started on it," he says. "It is an enormous and ambitious book, and, as a film, I think it remains so, though obvious things had to be done with the material in order to turn it from a humongous five-hundred-page book into a two-hour movie that has its own logic."



In the men's last, desperate attempt to free themselves from the decades-old curse, Eva Galli is raised from her watery grave.

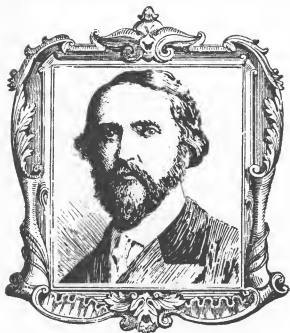
Many of the changes wrought in the Straub story are simple cinematic shorthand. One member of the Chowder Society, Lewis Benedikt, has been eliminated, though many of his traits have been incorporated into the character of Edward Wanderley. Don Wanderley, Edward's nephew in the book, is now the man's son. These changes offer a tighter focus on fewer characters at the story's outset, and allows the Don Wanderley character to enter the film at the very start, when he returns to Milburn for the funeral of his brother.

The nature of the Galli spirit, and the circumstances that bring her into being, are also very different from the book. "In the movie, there's a very fine line being trod over whether Eva Galli is coming back by her own will as an avenging spirit, or whether these men are bringing her back by their guilt, their fear, their closeness to death," says Cohen. "The approach is much more psychological, which allows the film to approach the same level of complexity as the book, but in a different way."

Peter Straub tells us that he hasn't read the film's script, though he was offered the opportunity, glanced through it, and is familiar with many of the changes that have been made. Naturally he's hoping that the feeling, if not all of the substance, of his original work can be translated to the screen. "I know they eliminated the shape-changing nature of Eva," says Straub, "and I know that they've changed certain things to make it more a story about guilt. That's okay with me; it makes more sense as a film. But I do wish they'd kept the ending!"

"I hope that they can capture something of the complexity of the book, the minuet of different parts of the book filtering in and out. I also hope that it's as scary as I think the book is, without being nastily scary. And I particularly hope that the film manages to capture the Chowder Society, the affection that these characters have for each other and the love that I, as the novelist, have for them.

"I've met Larry Cohen, who apparently has a lot of respect for the book, though I'm sure his adaptation isn't slavish. I'm pretty optimistic . . . But of course, we'll never know until we see it." **IT**



## J. Sheridan LeFanu

by Mike Ashley

INTRODUCING THE SHY, RECLUSIVE DUBLINER  
WHOSE IMAGINATION WAS HAUNTED BY CRAWLING HANDS,  
MALEVOLENT MONKEYS, AND VAMPIRE TEMPTRESSES.

Who would you say should be regarded as the Father of the Modern Ghost Story? Edgar Allan Poe? He may have brought the sf, horror and detective short story into the world, but he had little time for tales of ghosts. M. R. James? By his day the modern ghost story was already well established, although he did much to improve the field. Charles Dickens? He did much in his day to popularize the ghost story.

In my opinion there is only one writer who can claim the title of Father of the Modern Ghost Story: Joseph Sheridan LeFanu. His writing career spanned the years from the days of the Gothic horror tales to those of the psychological ghost story, and not only is that development evident in his fiction, it can be attributed almost directly to it as well.

Joseph Thomas Sheridan LeFanu was born at the Royal Hibernian Military School in Dublin on August 28, 1814, the second of three children. The family was of Huguenot stock, having fled from France a century earlier. The very rare *Memoir of the LeFanu Family*, written and

privately printed by LeFanu's nephew Thomas in 1924, indicates a notable family connection through LeFanu's paternal grandmother, Alicia, who was the sister of the famous dramatist Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), author of *School for Scandal*.

LeFanu's father was resident chaplain at the Royal Hibernian School (LeFanu had a clerical background in common with M. R. James, Arthur Machen, E. F. Benson, and other writers on matters macabre). In 1826 he became Dean of Emly and Rector of Abington, and the family moved to a new home, which, though only six miles from Dublin, was in the midst of the lovely Irish countryside. Young Joseph's most impressionable years, however, had been spent in the old city of Dublin and in such suburbs as the village of Chapelizod, which features so strongly in some of his stories and in his novel *The House by the Churchyard*. In both town and country LeFanu loved to hear the local folk tales, many of which formed the basis for his later stories.

LeFanu had a happy childhood, and with his younger brother,

William, enjoyed playing practical jokes. LeFanu retained his sense of humor for most of his life; this is evident in certain of his early stories. However, growing up in Ireland has always had its problems, and it was no different in LeFanu's youth. The children were directly involved in the Tithe Riots that erupted between the peasantry and the landowners in the winter of 1830-31 but, on the whole, when political passions were not running high, young Joseph and the locals were usually the best of friends. Such tales as "The White Cat of Drumgunniol," "The Child That Went With the Fairies," "Stories of Lough Guir," and "Ultor de Lacy" owe their origins to these childhood acquaintances.

In 1833 LeFanu entered Trinity College, Dublin. In the same year a group of young students launched the first all-Irish periodical, the *Dublin University Magazine*. Its future and LeFanu's were united from the start. In 1838 LeFanu's first story, "The Ghost and the Bonesetter," appeared in the magazine's pages, and twenty-three years later he became both its editor and its owner—though by then the paper had long since disassociated

itself from the University. Most of LeFanu's stories and novels first appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine*, yet, ironically, his best-known tales first appeared elsewhere.

"The Ghost and the Bonesetter" is not typical of LeFanu's fiction, although it does reveal his sense of humor and his knowledge of the local tales and dialects. More typical was his second story, "The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh," a treatment of the ever-popular Faustian theme, which he would reuse in "The Haunted Baron" and "Sir Dominick's Bargain."

Over the next two years LeFanu placed eleven stories and a set of ballads with the *Magazine*, all published anonymously and all purporting to be true tales related to Father Francis Purcell, parish priest of Drumcoolagh in the south of Ireland. After LeFanu's death these stories were collected and published as *The Purcell Papers* (1880). The stories vary in quality and content, but one in particular stands out for its power and originality, "A Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter" (1839). Set in the seventeenth century during the apprenticeship of the Dutch painter Godfried Schalken to Gerard Douw, it sets out to interpret one of Schalken's paintings. Douw's niece, Rose, is married to the hideous Wilken Vanderhausen, but in less than a year the girl returns to her uncle—mad with fear, pleading for a minister, and screaming "... the dead and the living can never be one ...." The girl, left momentarily alone, disappears after "one last shriek, so long and piercing and agonized as to be scarcely human" and is never seen alive again. In the story's epilogue, Schalken is visiting a church many years later in Rotterdam. Overcome with fatigue, he falls asleep, only to be awakened by a female "clothed in a light robe of white, part of which was so disposed as to form a veil." She leads him to the vaults where he sees a heavily curtained bed and "sitting bolt upright in the bed, the livid and demoniac form of Vanderhausen."

Although Schalken is convinced of the reality of his vision, and encapsulated it in his painting, LeFanu deliberately contrived a second interpretation: that this was a dream inspired by the surroundings. This

dilemma would become the trademark of LeFanu's best-known stories.

LeFanu graduated from Trinity College with Honours in Classics and began the study of law. He was a noted debater and it was felt he would have a distinguished career when he was called to the Irish bar in 1839. But, to the disappointment of owl. At this point LeFanu shows his ability to create horror through implication rather than direct description. Barton's servant, who has just left the fateful chamber, returns along the corridor. He knows the room is empty save for Barton, but:

to his amazement, he heard a voice in the interior of the chamber answering calmly, and actually saw, through the window which overtopped the door, that the light was slowly shifting, as if carried across the room in answer to his master's call.

As the story develops, the skeptical Barton is forced to believe in the existence of the supernatural, but at the same time LeFanu places as much credence on Barton's growing madness, brought about through a guilty conscience over a sailor's death several years before.

The reader is given the same choice in "An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street" (later revised as "Mr Justice Harbottle," though with less effect), published in 1853. He suggests that a series of bizarre deaths may have been caused either by supernatural means or simply as the result of a fit, drunkenness, or just plain accident.

In 1851 LeFanu and his family moved into the house of his late father-in-law at 18 (now 70) Merrion Square, Dublin, described by Nelson Browne in his study of LeFanu as "the most splendid residential square in Europe." It was a happy if busy time for LeFanu, and the house saw the frequent visit of guests. Then in 1858 tragedy struck with the death of his young wife, Susan. From this date LeFanu became a virtual recluse, withdrawing more and more from society and earning himself the nickname of the Invisible Prince. For solace he turned once again to writing novels and stories. In the remaining fifteen years of his life he wrote at least a dozen novels and a

score or more shorter pieces. The most impressive work of his career by far dates from this time. In 1869 LeFanu sold the *Dublin University Magazine* and devoted all his time to writing.

In his essay on Sheridan LeFanu, many, he abandoned the law for journalism. In 1841 he became the owner and editor of the weekly Irish paper *The Warder*, and the next year bought *The Protestant Guardian*. Over the years he acquired equal shares in other papers, and their management must have occupied much of his time. In 1844 he married Susan Bennett, the daughter of a prominent barrister, and the years of happiness that followed gave LeFanu the peace of mind to concentrate on his careers, both as a newspaper proprietor-journalist and a writer.

He now turned his attention to the novel form, with two historical adventures set in Ireland's turbulent past, *The Cock and the Anchor* (1845) and *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien* (1847). The public reception was regrettably mild. As essayist Stewart M. Ellis observed: "... if LeFanu had continued his series of Irish historical romances, he might have done for Ireland what Scott achieved for Scotland: no writer has ever been more ably gifted to understand and interpret the forces, spiritual and natural, of his romantic native land."

LeFanu thus concentrated on journalism; over the next ten years he produced only a handful of stories, but it was at this time that his first collection appeared. That book, *Ghost Stories and Tales of Mystery* (1851), is now extremely rare. It included only four stories, "The Murdered Cousin," "Schalken the Painter," "The Evil Guest," and one that ranks among LeFanu's best, "The Watcher" (later retitled, rather irrelevantly, "The Familiar"). "The Watcher" relates the fate of a retired naval officer, Captain Barton, "an utter disbeliever in what are usually termed preternatural agencies," who finds himself a victim of certain inexplicable visitations. First, the incorporeal sound of footsteps following him through the Dublin streets in the dead of night, then fleeting visions of the Watcher himself, whose face "wore the stamp of menace and malignity," and at length to the final



LeFanu's classic tale "Carmilla" added an element of lesbian eroticism to the traditional vampire theme.

denouement, which, like the scene in "Schalken the Painter," takes place in a room where the door has suddenly become unaccountably jammed and where Barton comes face to face with his nemesis, now in the form of an Stewart Ellis provides an interesting description of LeFanu's working day during this period. Apparently he wrote mostly in bed at night by the light of two candles. After a brief sleep he would awake at about 2 A.M., and brew himself some strong tea, and then write for a few more hours "in that eerie period of the night when human vitality is at its lowest ebb and the Powers of Darkness rampant and terrifying." He rarely left the house, taking what exercise he had in the small garden. Only occasionally at night, much like H. P. Lovecraft, did he venture into the town, usually to visit old bookshops in search of writings on the occult.

LeFanu also began to revise many of his earlier stories either as new short stories or as episodes within longer works. The novels are styled more in the Gothic mode, their pages pervaded by Gothic gloom, suspense, and intrigue. There is little of the supernatural in any of them other than in isolated episodes or as complete inserted stories. Thus, in *The House by the Churchyard* (1861) we find the self-contained tale, "The Haunting of the Tiled House," regarded by Ellis as "the most terrifying ghost story in the language" and the forerunner of all those stories, about a vengeful, disembodied hand. Elsewhere in the novel is the horrific trepanning episode

about which Dorothy Sayers wrote: "For sheer grimness and power there is little in the literature of horror to compare."

Of LeFanu's other novels, those worth tracking down are *Wylder's Hand* (1864), *Uncle Silas* (1864), and *Guy Deverell* (1865), all written during a period of feverish inspiration and ranking among the best novels of mystery and suspense written during the nineteenth century, comparable to Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*, which were written during that same decade.

But it was in the short story that LeFanu proved the master, and in the final years, as his mind was tormented by vivid nightmares, he produced three of the field's greatest works. They were gathered, along with two revisions of earlier stories, into the collection, *In A Glass Darkly* (1872). The three stories are, of course, "Green Tea," "The Room in the Dragon Volant," and "Carmilla."

"Green Tea" must rate as one of the most frequently anthologized stories of all time. It has achieved a certain fame because of LeFanu's use of the character Dr. Martin Hesselius, the forerunner of all psychic detectives. Hesselius is of little importance to the story, though, being merely a device for continuity, just as LeFanu had used Father Purcell years earlier. The real importance of "Green Tea" is that it firmly introduced the psychological ghost story once and for all. It concerns the unfortunate Reverend Jennings, who like LeFanu becomes a regular drinker of green tea, and thereafter finds himself haunted by the specter of a small black monkey with eyes like "tiny discs of red" and a manner of "unfathomable malignity." The monkey is visible to him and him alone, and although it departs for weeks at a time, it always returns to dash all hopes of salvation. Its continued presence over a period of years drives the Reverend to madness and suicide. There is much in common between "Green Tea" and "The Watcher," but now LeFanu seemed to be writing with intense conviction. The story was as much an expression of LeFanu's inner dilemmas as the monkey was a manifestation of the clergyman's suppressed frustrations.

"The Room at the Dragon

Volant" is not as well known as its companions, because its length has precluded its appearance in story collections. Many agree, however, that it is LeFanu's best story, the normally caustic Glen St. John Barclay going so far as to call it "probably as perfect a piece of narrative as any in English." LeFanu resorts to no supernatural agencies in this macabre mystery, but instead conjures up several scenes of excruciating suspense, especially at the climax when the hero, Richard Beckett, having been injected with a drug that renders total immobility without impairing awareness, lies helpless in a coffin while his captors prepare to bury him alive—an episode equal to Poe at his best.

"Carmilla," however, must rank as LeFanu's supreme achievement. It was the first modern vampire story and, as Glen Barclay observed, "There was really no need for anybody to write another vampire story. Everything composed since has been only a variation on the themes developed in that novelette." What's more, LeFanu trespassed into the taboo areas of lesbianism, including scenes that were somewhat shocking to the Victorians. A quarter of a century before Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, "Carmilla" included all the ingredients of the traditional vampire legend but with none of the brash insensitivity of the Gothic approach, and made all the more potent by the succinctness of LeFanu's narrative.

A year later, after the first publication of "Carmilla," LeFanu was dead. In his last years he suffered from a bad heart and was troubled by persistent nightmares. Stewart Ellis tells us of one he reported to his doctor. It was of an old, ruined mansion which threatened to fall upon and crush the dreamer. At the end, LeFanu's doctor stood by the dead man's bedside and looked into his terror-stricken eyes. "I feared this," he said. "That house fell at last."

LeFanu died on February 7, 1873 of a heart attack. He was fifty-eight. Within a decade most of his works were forgotten and it would be fifty years before the industrious endeavors of M. R. James revived an interest in LeFanu and showed us all that LeFanu was indeed the Father of Phantoms. **12**

# An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street

by J. Sheridan LeFanu

STOKE THE FIRE, MULL SOME WINE,  
AND USHER IN THE CHRISTMAS SEASON THE WAY THE VICTORIANS DID,  
WITH THIS CLASSIC HAUNTED-HOUSE TALE BY A MASTER OF THE FORM.

It is not worth telling, this story of mine—at least, not worth writing. Told, indeed, as I have sometimes been called upon to tell it, to a circle of intelligent and eager faces, lighted up by a good after-dinner fire on a winter's evening, with a cold wind rising and wailing outside, and all snug and cosy within, it has gone off—though I say it, who should not—indifferent well. But it is a venture to do as you would have me. Pen, ink, and paper are cold vehicles for the marvellous, and a “reader” decidedly a more critical animal than a “listener.” If, however, you can induce your friends to read it after nightfall, and when the fireside talk has run for a while or . . . g tales of shapeless terror; in short, if you will secure me the *mollia tempora fandi*, I will go to my work, and say my say, with better heart. Well, then, these conditions presupposed, I shall waste no more words, but tell you simply how it all happened.

My cousin (Tom Ludlow) and I studied medicine together. I think he would have succeeded, had he stuck to the profession; but he preferred the Church, poor fellow, and died early, a sacrifice to contagion, contracted in the noble discharge of his duties. For my present purpose, I say enough of his character when I mention that he was of a sedate but frank and cheerful nature; very exact in his observance of truth, and not by any means like myself—of an excitable or nervous temperament.

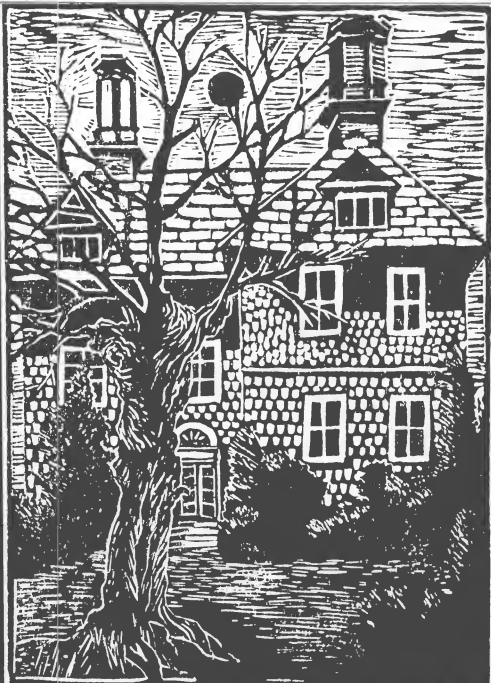
My Uncle Ludlow—Tom's father—while we were attending lectures, purchased three or four old houses in Aungier Street, one of which was unoccupied. *He* resided in the country, and Tom proposed that we should take up our abode in the untenanted house, so long as it should continue unlet; a move which would accomplish the double end of settling us nearer alike to our lecture-rooms and to our amusements, and of relieving us from the weekly charge of rent for our lodgings.

Our furniture was very scant—our whole equipage remarkably modest and primitive; and, in short, our arrangements pretty nearly as simple as those of a bivouac. Our new plan was, therefore, executed almost as soon as conceived. The front drawing-room was our sitting-room. I had the bedroom over it, and Tom the back bedroom on the same floor, which nothing could have induced me to occupy.

The house, to begin with, was a very old one. It had been, I believe, newly fronted about fifty years before; but with this exception, it had nothing modern about it. The agent who bought it and looked into the titles for my uncle, told me that it was sold, along with much other forfeited property, at Chichester House, I think, in 1702; and had belonged to Sir Thomas Hacket, who was Lord Mayor of Dublin in James II's time. How old it was *then*, I can't say; but, at all events, it had seen years and changes enough to have contracted all that mysterious and saddened air, at once exciting and depressing, which belongs to most old mansions.

There had been very little done in the way of modernising details; and, perhaps, it was better so; for there was something queer and by-gone in the very walls and ceilings—in the shape of doors and windows—in the odd diagonal site of the chimney-pieces—in the beams and ponderous cornices—not to mention the singular solidity of all the wood-work, from the banisters to the window-frames, which hopelessly defied disguise, and would have emphatically proclaimed their antiquity through any conceivable amount of modern finery and varnish.

An effort had, indeed, been made, to the extent of papering the drawing-rooms; but somehow, the paper looked raw and out of keeping; and the old woman, who kept a little dirt-pie of a shop in the lane, and whose daughter—a girl of two and fifty—was our solitary handmaid, coming in at sun-



rise, and chastely receding again as soon as she had made all ready for tea in our state apartment;—this woman, I say, remembered it, when old Judge Horrocks (who, having earned the reputation of a particularly “hanging judge,” ended by hanging himself, as the coroner’s jury found, under an impulse of “temporary insanity,” with a child’s skipping rope, over the massive old banisters) resided there, entertaining good company, with fine venison and rare old port. In those halcyon days, the drawing-rooms were hung with gilded leather, and, I dare say, cut a good figure, for they were really spacious rooms.

The bedrooms were wainscoted, but the front one was not gloomy; and in it the cosiness of antiquity quite overcame its sombre associations. But the back bedroom, with its two queerly-placed melancholy windows, staring vacantly at the foot of the bed, and with the shadowy recess to be found in

most old houses in Dublin, like a large ghostly closet, which, from congeniality of temperament, had amalgamated with the bedchamber, and dissolved the partition. At night-time, this “alcove”—as our “maid” was wont to call it—had, in my eyes, a specially sinister and suggestive character. Tom’s distant and solitary candle glimmered vainly into its darkness. *There* it was always overlooking him—always itself impenetrable. But this was only part of the effect. The whole room was, I can’t tell how, repulsive to me. There was, I suppose, in its proportions and features, a latent discord—a certain mysterious and indescribable relation, which jarred indistinctly upon some secret sense of the fitting and the safe, and raised undefinable suspicions and apprehensions of the imagination. On the whole, as I began by saying, nothing could have induced me to pass a night alone in it.

**"It is quite plain  
that this dirty old house  
disagrees with us both,  
and hang me  
if I stay here  
any longer!"**

I had never pretended to conceal from poor Tom my superstitious weakness; and he, on the other hand, most unaffectedly ridiculed my tremors. The sceptic was, however, destined to receive a lesson, as you shall hear.

We had not been very long in occupation of our respective dormitories, when I began to complain of uneasy nights and disturbed sleep. I was, I suppose, the more impatient under this annoyance, as I was usually a sound sleeper, and by no means prone to nightmares. It was now, however, my destiny, instead of enjoying my customary repose, every night to "sup full of horrors." After a preliminary course of disagreeable and frightful dreams, my troubles took a definite form, and the same vision, without an appreciable variation in a single detail, visited me at least (on an average) every second night in the week.

Now, this dream, nightmare, or infernal illusion—which you please—of which I was the miserable sport, was on this wise:—

I saw, or thought I saw, with the most abominable distinctness, although at the time in profound darkness, every article of furniture and accidental arrangement of the chamber in which I lay. This, as you know, is incidental to ordinary nightmare. Well, while in this clairvoyant condition, which seemed but the lighting up of the theatre in which was to be exhibited the monotonous tableau of horror, which made my nights insupportable, my attention invariably became, I know not why, fixed upon the windows opposite the foot of my bed; and uniformly with the same effect, a sense of dreadful anticipation always took slow but sure possession of me. I became somehow conscious of a sort of horrid but undefined preparation going forward in some unknown quarter, and by some unknown agency, for my torment; and, after an interval, which always seemed to me of the same length, a picture suddenly flew up to the window, where it remained fixed, as if by an electrical attraction, and my discipline of horror when commenced, to last perhaps for hours. The picture thus mysteriously glued to the window-panes, was the portrait of an old man, in a crimson flowered silk dressing-gown, the folds of which I could now describe, with a countenance embodying a strange mixture of intellect, sensuality, and power, but withal sinister and full of malignant omen. His nose was hooked, like the beak of a vulture; his eyes large, grey, and prominent, and

lighted up with a more than mortal cruelty and coldness. These features were surmounted by a crimson velvet cap, the hair that peeped from under which was white with age, while the eyebrows retained their original blackness. Well I remember every line, hue, and shadow of that stony countenance, and well I may! The gaze of this hellish visage was fixed upon me, and mine returned it with the inexplicable fascination of nightmare, what appeared to me to be hours of agony. At last—

The cock he crew, away then flew

the fiend who had enslaved me through the awful watches of the night; and, harassed and nervous, I rose to the duties of the day.

I had—I can't say exactly why, but it may have been from the exquisite anguish and profound impressions of unearthly horror, with which this strange phantasmagoria was associated—an insurmountable antipathy to describing the exact nature of my nightly troubles to my friend and comrade. Generally, however, I told him that I was haunted by abominable dreams; and, true to the imputed materialism of medicine, we put our heads together to dispel my horrors, not by exorcism, but by a tonic.

I will do this tonic justice, and frankly admit that the accursed portrait began to intermit its visits under its influence. What of that? Was this singular apparition—as full of character as of terror—therefore the creature of my fancy, or the invention of my poor stomach? Was it, in short, *subjective* (to borrow the technical slang of the day) and not the palpable aggression and intrusion of an external agent? That, good friend, as we will both admit, by no means follows. The evil spirit, who enthralled my senses in the shape of that portrait, may have been just as near me, just as energetic, just as malignant, though I saw him not. What means the whole moral code of revealed religion regarding the due keeping of our own bodies, soberness, temperance, etc.? here is an obvious connexion between the material and the invisible; the healthy tone of the system, and its unimpaired energy, may, for aught we can tell, guard us against influences which would otherwise render life itself terrific. The mesmerist and the electrobiologist will fail upon an average with nine patients out of ten—so may the evil spirit. Special conditions of the corporeal system are indispensable to the production of certain spiritual phenomena. The operation succeeds sometimes—sometimes fails—that is all.

I found afterwards that my would-be sceptical companion had his troubles too: But of these I knew nothing yet. One night, for a wonder, I was sleep-



ing soundly, when I was roused by a step on the lobby outside my room, followed by the loud clang of what turned out to be a large brass candlestick, flung with all his force by poor Tom Ludlow over the banisters, and rattling with a rebound down the second flight of stairs; and almost concurrently with this, Tom burst open my door, and bounced into my room backwards, in a state of extraordinary agitation.

I had jumped out of bed and clutched him by the arm before I had any distinct idea of my own whereabouts. There we were—in our shirts—standing before the open door—staring through the great old banister opposite, at the lobby window, through which the sickly light of a clouded moon was gleaming.

"What's the matter, Tom? What's the matter with you? What the devil's the matter with you Tom?" I demanded, shaking him with nervous impatience.

He took a long breath before he answered me, and then it was not very coherently.

"It's nothing, nothing at all—did I speak?—what did I say?—where's the candle, Richard? It's dark; I—I had a candle!"

"Yes, dark enough," I said; "but what's the matter?—what is it?—why don't you speak, Tom?—have you lost your wits?—what's the matter?"

"The matter?—oh, it is all over. It must have been a dream—nothing at all but a dream—don't you think so? It could not be anything more than a dream."

"Of course," said I, feeling uncommonly nervous, "it was a dream."

"I thought," he said, "there was a man in my room, and—and I jumped out of bed; and—and—where's the candle?"

"In your room, most likely," I said, "shall I go and bring it?"

"No; stay here—don't go; it's no matter—don't, I tell you; it was all a dream. Bolt the door, Dick; I'll stay here with you—I feel nervous. So, Dick, like a good fellow, light your candle and open the window—I am in a shocking state."

I did as he asked me, and robing himself like Granuaile in one of my blankets, he seated himself close beside my bed.

Everybody knows how contagious is fear of all sorts, but more especially that particular kind of fear under which poor Tom was at that moment labouring. I would not have heard, nor I believe would he have recapitulated, just at that moment, for half the world, the details of the hideous vision which had so unmanned him.

"Don't mind telling me anything about your nonsensical dream, Tom," said I, affecting contempt, really in a panic; "let us talk about



*His eyes lighted up with a more than mortal cruelty and coldness.*

something else; but it is quite plain that this dirty old house disagrees with us both, and hang me if I stay here any longer, to be pestered with indigestion and—bad nights, so we may as well look out for lodgings—don't you think so?—at once."

Tom agreed, and, after an interval, said—

"I have been thinking, Richard, that it is a long time since I saw my father, and I have made up my mind to go down tomorrow and return in a day or two, and you can take rooms for us in the meantime."

I fancied that this resolution, obviously the result of the vision which had so profoundly scared him, would probably vanish next morning with the damps and shadows of night. But I was mistaken. Off went Tom at peep of day to the country, having agreed that so soon as I had secured suitable lodgings, I was to recall him by letter from his visit to my Uncle Ludlow.

Now, anxious as I was to change my quarters, it so happened, owing to a series of petty procrastinations and accidents, that nearly a week elapsed before my bargain was made and my letter of recall on the wing to Tom; and, in the meantime, a trifling adventure or two had occurred to your humble servant, which, absurd as they now appear, diminished by distance, did certainly at the time serve to whet my appetite for change considerably.

A night or two after the departure of my comrade, I was sitting by my bedroom fire, the door locked, and the ingredients of a tumbler of hot

**I saw the infernal gaze  
and the accursed countenance  
of my old friend  
in the portrait,  
transfused into the visage  
of the bloated vermin  
before me.**

whisky-punch upon the crazy spider-table; for, as the best mode of keeping the

Black spirits and white,  
Blue spirits and grey,

with which I was environed, at bay, I had adopted the practice recommended by the wisdom of my ancestors, and "kept my spirits up by pouring spirits down." I had thrown aside my volume of *Anatomy*, and was treating myself by way of a tonic, preparatory to my punch and bed, to half-a-dozen pages of the *Spectator*, when I heard a step on the flight of stairs descending from the attics. It was two o'clock, and the streets were as silent as a churchyard—the sounds were, therefore, perfectly distinct. There was a slow, heavy tread, characterised by the emphasis and deliberation of age, descending by the narrow staircase from above; and, what made the sound more singular, it was plain that the feet which produced it were perfectly bare, measuring the descent with something between a pound and a flop, very ugly to hear.

I knew quite well that my attendant had gone away many hours before, and that nobody but myself had any business in the house. It was quite plain also that the person who was coming down stairs had no intention whatever of concealing his movements; but, on the contrary, appeared disposed to make even more noise, and proceed more deliberately, than was at all necessary. When the step reached the foot of the stairs outside my room, it seemed to stop; and I expected every moment to see my door open spontaneously, and give admission to the original of my detested portrait. I was, however, relieved in a few seconds by hearing the descent renewed, just in the same manner, upon the staircase leading down to the drawing-rooms, and thence, after another pause, down the next flight, and so on to the hall, whence I heard no more.

Now, by the time the sound had ceased, I was wound up, as they say, to a very unpleasant pitch of excitement. I listened, but there was not a stir. I screwed up my courage to a decisive experiment—opened my door, and in a stentorian voice bawled over the banisters, "Who's there?" There was no answer but the ringing of my own voice through the empty old house,—no renewal of the movement; nothing, in short, to give my unpleasant sensations a definite direction. There is, I think, something most disagreeably disenchanting in the

sound of one's own voice under such circumstances, exerted in solitude, and in vain. It redoubled my sense of isolation, and my misgivings increased on perceiving that the door, which I certainly thought I had left open, was closed behind me; in a vague alarm, lest my retreat should be cut off, I got again into my room as quickly as I could, where I remained in a state of imaginary blockade, and very uncomfortable indeed, till morning.

Next night brought no return of my bare-footed fellow-lodger; but the night following, being in my bed, and in the dark—somewhere, I suppose, about the same hour as before, I distinctly heard the old fellow again descending from the garrets.

This time I had had my punch, and the *morale* of the garrison was consequently excellent. I jumped out of bed, clutched the poker as I passed the expiring fire, and in a moment was upon the lobby. The sound had ceased by this time—the dark and chill were discouraging; and, guess my horror, when I saw, or thought I saw, a black monster, whether in the shape of a man or a bear I could not say, standing, with its back to the wall, on the lobby, facing me, with a pair of great greenish eyes shining dimly out. Now, I must be frank, and confess that the cupboard which displayed our plates and cups stood just there, though at the moment I did not recollect it. At the same time I must honestly say, that making every allowance for an excited imagination, I never could satisfy myself that I was made the dupe of my own fancy in this matter; for this apparition, after one or two shiftings of shape, as if in the act of incipient transformation, began, as it seemed on second thoughts, to advance upon me in its original form. From an instinct of terror rather than of courage, I hurled the poker, with all my force, at its head; and to the music of a horrid crash made my way into my room, and double-locked the door. Then, in a minute more, I heard the horrid bare feet walk down the stairs, till the sound ceased in the hall, as on the former occasion.

If the apparition of the night before was an ocular delusion of my fancy sporting with the dark outlines of our cupboard, and if its horrid eyes were nothing but a pair of inverted teacups, I had, at all events, the satisfaction of having launched the poker with admirable effect, and in true "fancy" phrase, "knocked its two daylights into one," as the commingled fragments of my tea-service testified. I did my best to gather comfort and courage from these evidences; but it would not do. And then what could I say of those horrid bare feet, and the regular tramp, tramp, tramp, which measured the distance of the entire staircase through the solitude of my haunted dwelling, and at an hour when no good influence was stirring? Confound it!—the whole affair was abominable. I was out of spirits, and dreaded the approach of night.

It came, ushered ominously in with a thunder-storm and dull torrents of depressing rain. Earlier than usual the streets grew silent; and by twelve o'clock nothing but the comfortless pattering of the rain was to be heard.

I made myself as snug as I could. I lighted two candles instead of one. I forswore bed, and held myself in readiness for a sally, candle in hand; for, *coute qui coute*, I was resolved to see the being, if visible at all, who troubled the nightly stillness of my mansion. I was fidgetty and nervous and tried in vain to interest myself with my books. I walked up and down my room, whistling in turn martial and hilarious music, and listening ever and anon for the dreaded noise. I sat down and stared at the square label on the solemn and reserved-looking black bottle, until "FLANAGAN & CO'S BEST OLD MALT WHISKY" grew into a sort of subdued accompaniment to all the fantastic and horrible speculations which chased one another through my brain.

Silence, meanwhile, grew more silent, and darkness darker. I listened in vain for the rumble of a vehicle, or the dull clamour of a distant row. There was nothing but the sound of a rising wind, which had succeeded the thunder-storm that had travelled over the Dublin mountains quite out of hearing. In the middle of this great city I began to feel myself alone with nature, and Heaven knows what beside. My courage was ebbing. Punch, however, which makes beasts of so many, made a man of me again—just in time to hear with tolerable nerve and firmness the lumpy, flabby, naked feet deliberately descending the stairs again.

I took a candle, not without a tremour. As I crossed the floor I tried to extemporise a prayer, but stopped short to listen, and never finished it. The steps continued. I confess I hesitated for some seconds at the door before I took heart of grace and opened it. When I peeped out the lobby was perfectly empty—there was no monster standing on the staircase; and as the detested sound ceased, I was reassured enough to venture forward nearly to the banisters. Horror of horrors! within a stair or two beneath the spot where I stood the unearthly tread smote the floor. My eye caught something in motion; it was about the size of Goliath's foot—it was grey, heavy, and flapped with a dead weight from one step to another. As I am alive, it was the most monstrous grey rat I ever beheld or imagined.

Shakespeare says—"Some men there are can not abide a gaping pig, and some that are mad if they behold a cat." I went well-nigh out of my wits when I beheld this *rat*; for, laugh at me as you may, it fixed upon me, I thought, a perfectly human expression of malice; and, as it shuffled about and looked up into my face almost from between my feet, I saw, I could swear it—I felt it then, and know it now, the infernal gaze and the accursed



*This apparition began to advance upon me . . .*

countenance of my old friend in the portrait, transfused into the visage of the bloated vermin before me.

I bounced into my room again with a feeling of loathing and horror I cannot describe, and locked and bolted my door as if a lion had been at the other side. D—n him or it; curse the portrait and its original! I felt in my soul that the rat—yes, the *rat*, the RAT I had just seen, was that evil being in masquerade, and rambling through the house upon some infernal night lark.

Next morning I was early trudging through the miry streets; and, among other transactions, posted a peremptory note recalling Tom. On my return, however, I found a note from my absent "chum," announcing his intended return next day. I was doubly rejoiced at this, because I had succeeded in getting rooms; and because the change of scene and return of my comrade were rendered specially pleasant by the last night's half ridiculous half horrible adventure.

I slept extemporaneously in my new quarters in Digges' Street that night, and next morning returned for breakfast to the haunted mansion, where I was certain Tom would call immediately on his arrival.

I was quite right—he came; and almost his first question referred to the primary object of our change of residence.

"Thank God," he said with genuine fervour, on hearing that all was arranged. "On *your* account I am delighted. As to myself, I assure you that no

# Strange Disturbances

earthly consideration could have induced me ever again to pass a night in this disastrous old house."

"Confound the house!" I ejaculated, with a genuine mixture of fear and detestation, "we have not had a pleasant hour since we came to live here"; and so I went on, and related incidentally my adventure with the plethoric old rat.

"Well, if that were *all*," said my cousin, affecting to make light of the matter, "I don't think I should have minded it very much."

"Ay, but its eye—its countenance, my dear Tom," urged I; "if you had seen *that*, you would have felt it might be *anything* but what it seemed."

"I inclined to think the best conjurer in such a case would be an able-bodied cat," he said, with a provoking chuckle.

"But let us hear your own adventure," I said tartly.

At this challenge he looked uneasily round him. I had poked up a very unpleasant recollection.

"You shall hear it, Dick; I'll tell it to you," he said. "Begad, sir, I should feel quite queer, though, telling it *here*, though we are too strong a body for ghosts to meddle with just now."

Though he spoke this like a joke, I think it was a serious calculation. Our Hebe was in a corner of the room, packing our cracked delft tea and dinner-services in a basket. She soon suspended operations, and with mouth and eyes wide open became an absorbed listener. Tom's experiences were told nearly in these words:—

"I saw it three times, Dick—three distinct times; and I am perfectly certain it meant me some infernal harm. I was, I say, in danger—in *extreme* danger; for, if nothing else had happened, my reason would most certainly have failed me, unless I had escaped so soon. Thank God. I *did* escape."

"The first night of this hateful disturbance, I was lying in the attitude of sleep, in that lumbering old bed. I hate to think of it. I was really wide awake, though I had put out my candle, and was lying as quietly as if I had been asleep; and although accidentally restless, my thoughts were running in a cheerful and agreeable channel."

"I think it must have been two o'clock at least when I thought I heard a sound in that—that odious dark recess at the far end of the bedroom. It was as if someone was drawing a piece of cord slowly along the floor, lifting it up, and dropping it softly down again in coils. I sat up once or twice in my bed, but could see nothing, so I concluded it must be mice in the wainscot. I felt no emotion graver than curiosity, and after a few minutes ceased to observe it."

"While lying in this state, strange to say; without at first a suspicion of anything supernatural, on a sudden I saw an old man, rather stout

and square, in a sort of roan-red dressing gown, and with a black cap on his head, moving stiffly and slowly in a diagonal direction, from the recess, across the floor of the bedroom, passing my bed at the foot, and entering the lumber-closet at the left. He had something under his arm; his head hung a little at one side; and, merciful God! when I saw his face."

Tom stopped for a while, and then said—

"That awful countenance, which living or dying I never can forget, disclosed what he was. Without turning to the right or left, he passed beside me, and entered the closet by the bed's head."

"While this fearful and indescribable type of death and guilt was passing, I felt that I had no more power to speak or stir than if I had been myself a corpse. For hours after it had disappeared, I was too terrified and weak to move. As soon as daylight came, I took courage, and examined the room, and especially the course which the frightful intruder had seemed to take, but there was not a vestige to indicate anybody's having passed there; no sign of any disturbing agency visible among the lumber that strewed the floor of the closet."

"I now began to recover a little. I was fagged and exhausted, and at last, overpowered by a feverish sleep. I came down late; and finding you out of spirits, on account of your dreams about the portrait, whose *original* I am now certain disclosed himself to me, I did not care to talk about the infernal vision. In fact, I was trying to persuade myself that the whole thing was an illusion, and I did not like to revive in their intensity the hated impressions of the past night—or to risk the constancy of my scepticism, by recounting the tale of my sufferings."

"It required some nerve, I can tell you, to go to my haunted chamber next night, and lie down quietly in the same bed," continued Tom. "I did so with a degree of trepidation, which, I am not ashamed to say, a very little matter would have sufficed to stimulate to downright panic. This night, however, passed off quietly enough, as also the next; and so too did two or three more. I grew more confident, and began to fancy that I believed in the theories of spectral illusions, with which I had at first vainly tried to impose upon my convictions."

"The apparition had been, indeed, altogether anomalous. It had crossed the room without any recognition of my presence: I had not disturbed it, and it had no mission to me. What, then, was the imaginable use of its crossing the room in a visible shape at all? Of course it might have been in the closet instead of *going* there, as easily as it introduced itself into the recess without entering the chamber in a shape discernible by the senses."

Besides, how the deuce *had* I seen it? It was a dark night; I had no candle; there was no fire; and yet I saw it as distinctly, in colouring and outline, as ever I beheld human form! A cataleptic dream would explain it all; and I was determined that a dream it should be.

"One of the most remarkable phenomena connected with the practice of mendacity is the vast number of deliberate lies we tell ourselves, whom, of all persons, we can least expect to deceive. In all this, I need hardly tell you, Dick, I was simply lying to myself, and did not believe one word of the wretched humbug. Yet I went on, as men will do, like persevering charlatans and impostors, who tire people into credulity by the mere force of reiteration; so I hoped to win myself over at last to a comfortable scepticism about the ghost.

"He had not appeared a second time—that certainly was a comfort; and what, after all, did I care for him, and his queer old toggery and strange looks? Not a fig! I was nothing the worse for having seen him, and a good story the better. So I tumbled into bed, put out my candle, and, cheered by a loud drunken quarrel in the back lane, went fast asleep.

"From this deep slumber I awoke with a start. I knew I had had a horrible dream; but what it was I could not remember. My heart was thumping furiously; I felt bewildered and feverish; I sat up in bed and looked about the room. A broad flood of moonlight came in through the curtainless window; everything was as I had last seen it; and though the domestic squabble in the back lane was, unhappily for me, alayed, I yet could hear a pleasant fellow singing, on his way home, the then popular comic ditty called, 'Murphy Delany.' Taking advantage of this diversion I lay down again, with my face towards the fireplace, and closing my eyes, did my best to think of nothing else but the song, which was every moment growing fainter in the distance:—

'Twas Murphy Delany, so funny and frisky,  
Stept into a shebeen shop to get his skin flung;  
He reeled out again pretty well lined with whiskey,  
As fresh as a shamrock, as blind as a bull.

"The singer, whose condition I dare say resembled that of his hero, was soon too far off to regale my ears any more; and as his music died away, I myself sank into a doze, neither sound nor refreshing. Somehow the song had got into my head, and I went meandering on through the adventures of my respectable fellow-countryman, who, on emerging from the 'shebeen shop,' fell into a river, from which he was fished up to be 'sat upon' by a coroner's jury, who having learned from a 'horse-doctor' that he was 'dead as a door-nail, so there was an end,' returned their verdict accordingly, just as he returned to his senses, when an angry alterca-



*It was about the size of Goliath's foot.*

tion and a pitched battle between the body and the coroner winds up the lay with due spirit and pleanantry.

"Through this ballad I continued with a weary monotony to plod, down to the very last line, and then *da capo*, and so on, in my uncomfortable half-sleep, for how long, I can't conjecture. I found myself at last, however, muttering, '*dead* as a door-nail, so there was an end'; and something like another voice within me, seemed to say, very faintly, but sharply, '*dead! dead! dead!* and may the Lord have mercy on your soul!' and instantaneously I was wide awake, and staring right before me from the pillow.

"Now—will you believe it, Dick?—I saw the same accursed figure standing full front, and gazing at me with its stony and fiendish countenance, not two yards from the bedside."

Tom stopped here, and wiped the perspiration from his face. I felt very queer. The girl was as pale as Tom; and, assembled as we were in the very scene of these adventures, we were all, I dare say, equally grateful for the clear daylight and the resuming bustle out of doors.

"For about three seconds only I saw it plainly; then it grew indistinct; but, for a long time, there was something like a column of dark vapour where it had been standing, between me and the wall; and I felt sure that he was still there. After a good while, this appearance went too. I took my clothes downstairs to the hall, and dressed there, with the door half open; then went out into the

# Strange Disturbances

street, and walked about the town til morning, when I came back, in a miserable state of nervousness and exhaustion. I was such a fool, Dick, as to be ashamed to tell you how I came to be so upset. I thought you would laugh at me; especially as I had always talked philosophy, and treated *your* ghosts with contempt. I concluded you would give me no quarter; and so kept my tale of horror to myself.

"Now, Dick, you will hardly believe me, when I assure you, that for many nights after this last experience, I did not go to my room at all. I used to sit up for a while in the drawing-room after you had gone up to your bed; and then steal down softly to the hall-door, let myself out, and sit in the 'Robin Hood' tavern until the last guest went off; and then I got through the night like a sentry, pacing the streets till morning.

"For more than a week I never slept in bed. I sometimes had a snooze on a form in the 'Robin Hood,' and sometimes a nap in a chair during the day; but regular sleep I had absolutely none.

"I was quite resolved that we should get into another house; but I could not bring myself to tell you the reason, and I somehow put it off from day to day, although my life was, during every hour of this procrastination, rendered as miserable as that of a felon with the constables on his track. I was growing absolutely ill from this wretched mode of life.

"One afternoon I determined to enjoy an hour's sleep upon your bed. I hated mine; so that I had never, except in a stealthy visit every day to unmake it, lest Martha should discover the secret of my nightly absence, entered the ill-omened chamber.

"As ill-luck would have it, you had locked your bedroom, and taken away the key. I went into my own to unsettle the bedclothes, as usual, and give the bed the appearance of having been slept in. Now, a variety of circumstances concurred to bring about the dreadful scene through which I was that night to pass. In the first place, I was literally overpowered with fatigue, and longing for sleep; in the next place, the effect of this extreme exhaustion upon my nerves resembled that of a narcotic, and rendered me less susceptible than, perhaps, I should in any other condition have been, of the exciting fears which had become habitual to me. Then again, a little bit of the window was open, a pleasant freshness pervaded the room, and, to crown all, the cheerful sun of the day was making the room quite pleasant. What was to prevent my enjoying an hour's nap *here*? The whole air was resonant with the cheerful hum of life, and the broad matter-of-fact light of day filled every corner of the room.

"I yielded—stifling my qualms—to the almost

overpowering temptation; and merely throwing off my coat, and loosening my cravat, I lay down, limiting myself to *half-an-hour's* doze in the unwonted enjoyment of a feather bed, a coverlet, and a bolster.

"It was horribly insidious; and the demon, no doubt, marked my infatuated preparations. Dolt that I was, I fancied, with mind and body worn out for want of sleep, and an arrears of a full week's rest to my credit, that such measure as *half-an-hour's* sleep, in such a situation, was possible. My sleep was death-like, long, and dreamless.

"Without a start or fearful sensation of any kind, I waked gently, but completely. It was, as you have good reason to remember, long past midnight—I believe, about two o'clock. When sleep has been deep and long enough to satisfy nature thoroughly, one often wakens in this way, suddenly, tranquilly, and completely.

"There was a figure seated in that lumbering, old sofa-chair, near the fireplace. Its back was rather towards me, but I could not be mistaken; it turned slowly round, and, merciful heavens! there was the stony face, with its infernal lineaments of malignity and despair, gloating on me. There was now no doubt as to its consciousness of my presence, and the hellish malice with which it was animated, for it arose, and drew close to the bedside. There was a rope around its neck, and the other end, coiled up, it held stiffly in its hand.

"My good angel nerved me for this horrible crisis. I remained for some seconds transfixed by the gaze of this tremendous phantom. He came close to the bed, and appeared on the point of mounting upon it. The next instant I was upon the floor at the far side, and in a moment more was, I don't know how, upon the lobby.

"But the spell was not yet broken; the valley of the shadow of death was not yet traversed. The abhorred phantom was before me there; it was standing near the banisters, stooping a little, and with one end of the rope round its own neck, was poising a noose at the other, as if to throw over mine; and while engaged in this baleful pantomime, it wore a smile so sensual, so unspeakably dreadful, that my senses were nearly overpowered. I saw and remember nothing more, until I found myself in your room.

"I had a wonderful escape, Dick—there is no disputing *that*—an escape for which, while I live, I shall bless the mercy of heaven. No one can conceive or imagine what it is for flesh and blood to stand in the presence of such a thing, but one who has had the terrific experience. Dick, Dick, a shadow has passed over me—a chill has crossed my blood and marrow, and I will never be the same again—never, Dick—never!"

Our handmaid, a mature girl of two-and-fifty, as I have said, stayed her hand, as Tom's story proceeded, and by little and little drew near to us, with open mouth, and her brows contracted over her little, beady black eyes, till stealing a glance over her shoulder now and then, she established herself close behind us. During the relation, she had made various earnest comments, in an undertone; but these and her ejaculations, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, I have omitted in my narration.

"It's often I heard tell of it," she now said, "but I never believed it rightly till now—though, indeed, why should not I? Does not my mother, down there in the lane, know quare stories, God bless us, beyant telling about it? But you ought not to have slept in the back bedroom. She was loath to let me be going in and out of that room even in the day time, let alone for any Christian to spend the night in it; for sure she says it was his own bedroom."

"Whose own bedroom?" we asked, in a breath.

"Why, *his*—the ould Judge's—Judge Horrock's, to be sure, God rest his soul!"; and she looked fearfully round.

"Amen!" I muttered. "But did he die there?"

"Die there! No, not quite *there*," she said. "Shure, was not it over the banisters he hung himself, the ould sinner, God be merciful to us all? and was not it in the alcove they found the handles of the skipping-rope cut off, and the knife where he was settling the cord, God bless us, to hang himself with? It was his housekeeper's daughter owned the rope, my mother often told me, and the child never thrave after, and used to be starting up out of her sleep, and screeching in the night time, wid dhrames and frighs that cum an her; and they said how it was the speerit of the ould Judge that was tormentin' her; and she used to be roaring and yelling out to hould back the big ould fellow with the crooked neck; and then she'd screech 'Oh, the master! the master! he's stampin' at me, and beckoning to me! Mother, darling, don't let me go! And so the poor crathure died at last, and the doctors said it was wather on the brain, for it was all they could say."

"How long ago was all this?" I asked.

"Oh, then, how would I know?" she answered. "But it must be a wonderful long time ago, for the housekeeper was an ould woman, with a pipe in her mouth, and not a tooth left, and better nor eighty years ould when my mother was first married; and they said she was a rale buxom, fine-dressed woman when the ould Judge came to his end; an', indeed, my mother's not far from eighty years ould herself this day; and what made it worse for the unnatural ould villain, God rest his soul, to frighten the little girl out of the world the way he



... gazing at me with its stony and fiendish countenance, not two yards from the bedside.

did, was what was mostly thought and believed by every one. My mother says how the poor little crathure was his own child; for he was by all accounts an ould villain every way, an' the hangin'est judge that ever was known in Ireland's ground."

"From what you said about the danger of sleeping in that bedroom," said I, "I suppose there were stories about the ghost having appeared there to others."

"Well, there *was* things said—quare things, surely," she answered, as it seemed, with some reluctance. "And why would not there? Sure was it not up in that same room he slept for more than twenty years? and was it not in the *alcove* he got the rope ready that done his own business at last, the way he done many a better man's in his lifetime?—and was not the body lying in the same bed after death, and put in the coffin there, too, and carried out to his grave from it in Pether's churchyard, after the coroner was done? But there was quare stories—my mother has them all—about how one Nicholas Spaight got into trouble on the head of it."

"And what did they say of this Nicholas Spaight?" I asked.

"Oh, for that matther, it's soon told," she answered.

And she certainly did relate a very strange story, which so piqued my curiosity, that I took occasion to visit the ancient lady, her mother, from whom I learned many very curious particulars. Indeed, I am tempted to tell the tale, but my fingers

# Strange Disturbances

are weary, and I must defer it. But if you wish to hear it another time, I shall do my best.

When we had heard the strange tale I have not told you, we put one or two further questions to her about the alleged spectral visitations, to which the house had, ever since the death of the wicked old Judge, been subjected.

"No one ever had luck in it," she told us. "There was always cross accidents, sudden deaths, and short times in it. The first that tuck it was a family—I forget their name—but at any rate there was two young ladies and their papa. He was about sixty, and a stout healthy gentlemen as you'd wish to see at that age. Well, he slept in that unlucky back bedroom; and, God between us an' harm! sure enough he was found dead one morning, half out of the bed, with his head as black as a sloe, and swelled like a puddin', hanging down near the floor. It was a fit, they said. He was as dead as a mackerel, and so *he* could not say what it was; but the ould people was all sure that it was nothing at all but the ould Judge, God bless us! that frightened him out of his senses and his life together.

"Some time after there was a rich old maiden lady took the house. I don't know which room *she* slept in, but she lived alone; and at any rate, one morning, the servants going down early to their work, found her sitting on the passage-stairs, shivering and talkin' to herself, quite mad; and never a word more could any of *them* or her friends get from her ever afterwards but, 'Don't ask me to go, for I promised to wait for him.' They never made out from her who it was she meant by *him*, but of course those that knew all about the ould house were at no loss for the meaning of all that happened to her.

"Then afterwards, when the house was let out in lodgings, there was Micky Byrne that took the same room, with his wife and three little children; and sure I heard Mrs. Byrne myself telling how the children used to be lifted up in the bed at night, she could not see by what mains; and how they were starting and screeching every hour, just all as one as the housekeeper's little girl that died, till at last one night poor Micky had a drhop in him, the way he used now and again; and what do you think in the middle of the night he thought he heard a noise on the stairs, and being in liquor, nothing less id do him but out he must go himself to see what was wrong. Well, after that, all she ever heard of him was himself sayin', 'Oh, God!' and a tumble that shook the very house; and there, sure enough, he was lying on the lower stairs, under the lobby, with his neck smashed double under him, where he was flung over the banisters."

Then the handmaiden added—

"I'll go down to the lane, and send up Joe



*The other end, coiled up, it held stiffly in its hand.*

Gavvey to pack up the rest of the taythings, and bring all the things across to your new lodgings."

And so we all sallied out together, each of us breathing more freely, I have no doubt, as we crossed that ill-omened threshold for the last time.

Now, I may add thus much, in compliance with the immemorial usage of the realm of fiction, which sees the hero not only through his adventures, but fairly out of the world. You must have perceived that what the flesh, blood, and bone hero of romance proper is to the regular compounder of fiction, this old house of brick, wood, and mortar is to the humble recorder of this true tale. I, therefore, relate, as in duty bound, the catastrophe which ultimately befell it, which was simply this—that about two years subsequently to my story it was taken by a quack doctor, who called himself Baron Duhlstoerf, and filled the parlour windows with bottles of indescribable horrors preserved in brandy, and the newspapers with the usual grandiloquent and mendacious advertisements. This gentleman among his virtues did not reckon sobriety, and one night, being overcome with much wine, he set fire to his bed curtains, partially burned himself, and totally consumed the house. It was afterwards rebuilt, and for a time an undertaker established himself in the premises.

I have now told you my own and Tom's adventures, together with some valuable collateral particulars; and having acquitted myself of my engagement, I wish you a very good night, and pleasant dreams. 17





A TALE OF AGE AND EVERLASTING YOUTH, OF THE TIMELESSNESS  
OF NEWLY FALLEN SNOW. A TALE . . .

## Of Sleds and Forty Winters by Vic Johnson

He took the sled from his eleven-year-old son and held it close to his own chest. The elusive feel of the smooth, lacquered wood in his gloved hand brought a rush of memories. Sleds hadn't changed much in forty years. Well, maybe this one was a little lighter-built, a little less solid—the price had certainly gone up! But there was the old name printed in red letters on the center slat, there were the same metal parts painted red and blue.

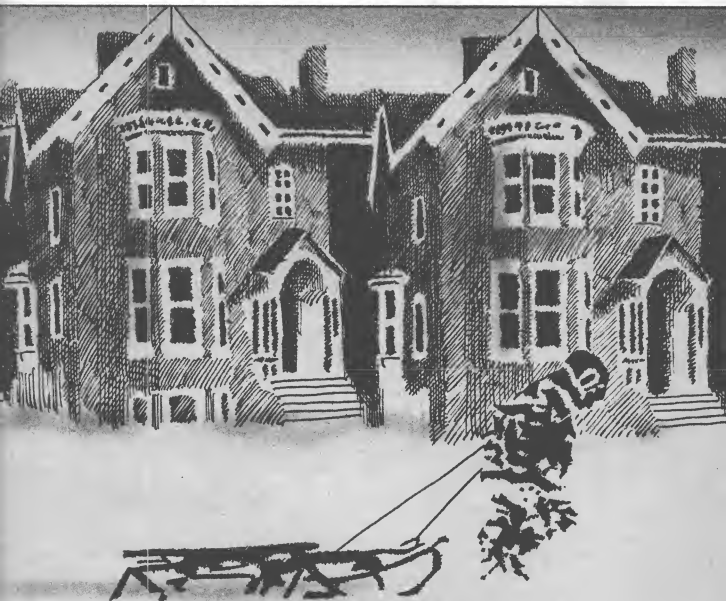
The man and his son stood in the center of a deserted residential side street in a middlewestern town. A thick layer of slick ice and tire-packed snow lay on the asphalt pavement. Above the rooftops the western sky hung colorless, as the last bit of sun slid below the horizon. The wine-dark shadow of the earth was rising in the east.

"Watch this," said the father, grinning through the frigid air at the boy. The man began to run in slow, clumsy steps. His heavy overshoes with the loose metal fasteners thudded and clinked against the ice. He ran faster, ignoring the dull

ache in his left hip. *Clomp ... clomp ... clomp ...* The cold air cut sharply down his throat. His lungs burned as if he were inhaling fire. *Clomp ... clomp ... clomp ...* It's the same street, he thought, the same old neighborhood. *Clomp, clomp, clomp.* He thrust the sled outward, leveling it. *Clomp ...* The runners clattered down on the ice and the father fell heavily, belly down, on top of the sled.

There was an exhilarating, giddy feeling in his gut as the sled slipped freely across the icy surface. The gun-metal-colored ice and white patches of snow shot along just inches below his face. Forty years rolled back. It was the same. The same! Behind him were the shouts of the other children as they ran and threw themselves down on their sleds. He heard them hit the ice, coming after him. Filled with a new excitement, he dug his left toe into the road and cramped the steering bar hard to the left. The sled spun, lost momentum, and crunched to a halt in the rutted snow along the gutter.

The street was empty except for his son, who stood a half-block away.



I was only ten years old, the father thought, forty years ago, right here on this street. It has changed some, but not much. The houses are the same ones, older, some needing paint and repair. Yet, in the bleached winter twilight, the details were indistinct and memory transcended fact as if he were seeing his own face in a dim mirror. It really hasn't changed that much, he declared.

Dragging the sled behind, the father walked slowly back to his son. The boy stood hunched and shivering. "How about that?" exclaimed the father, proudly, but somewhat at a loss for breath. "That's how we did it. Here, son, you try." He held out the sled at arm's length toward the boy. "Come on."

The boy took the sled reluctantly. "Dad, I don't ..."

"Do it just like I did," said the father, squeezing the boy's thin shoulder.

The boy ran, fell on the sled and rolled off as it squirted out from under him.

"Try again!" shouted the father.

Darkness slid silently beneath the skeleton

trees. A cold wind rattled the stiff branches and sent hard, dry crystals of snow hissing over the ice. A star began to gleam in the January sky.

Looking around, the man saw the house where he had been born, where he had grown to manhood. The kitchen windows at the back of the house were yellow with warm light. Back then, forty years ago, he thought, my mother would be just now cooking supper. In about five minutes she would call ...

Once this had been a neighborhood of Poles, Italians, and Irish. They were all gone. They had lived their lives, raised their children, and died. The children, after selling the houses to urban blacks fleeing the big city ghettos, had moved to new neighborhoods with streets named Heath Hill, Windermere Way, and Mill Pond Road.

"Dad!" shouted the boy as he flew past on the sled, "Daaaaaad!"

"That's it. That's it!"

Of all the people here on this street now, thought the father, only I remember. Why, this

## Of Sleds and Forty Winters

street used to be full of kids on a winter evening. Kids and sleds! I couldn't wait to get home from school, change clothes, get the sled from the garage, and polish up the runners with a handful of ashes that had been carried to the alley from the coal-burning furnaces. Every house had one. And there were the brick chimneys with plumes of gray smoke drifting downwind. I can still remember how that smoke flavored the air with the peppery taste of brimstone. Oh, the hours of running up and down this street. Hours? Was it hours, actually? In memory it seemed an age. A whole era. A gilded era!

How strange, thought the father. He felt as if he had shrunk inside his body, as if he had put on a suit of clothes far too large. It seemed that his mind had retreated into the recesses of his skull and that he was looking out through his eye sockets from some distance back. He put his hand to his temple and felt the blood throbbing. Voices and laughter swirled past on the wind. \*

With only a slight effort of will the father knew that he could become, in a marvelous instant, one with the past. He was filled with a transcendent joy. An illumination of a brilliant magnitude flooded his mind with a vision of time dispelled, of a dimension unimaginable, of the myriad facets of an infinite crystal. The sudden thought that he might be dying momentarily chilled the ecstasy. No, not death, he reasoned—metamorphosis! The facets were cross sections of time, and all facets were accessible. Like the butterfly rising from its chrysalis and into the air, he could emerge into an everlasting simultaneity. And, like the butterfly, he could descend into the gardens of time. The warmth and love beyond the two rectangular windows of golden light, there in the kitchen of his house, were only an effort away!

"Hey ..."

The father's body snapped sideways as if it had been in contact with a live electric wire.

"Dad! Are you okay?"

The father looked down into a small white face glazed red on the nose and the cheeks by the cold. Two sharp eyes peered up into his. "Dad, what's wrong?" asked the face, familiar, yet as dim as a surfacing, long unremembered image.

"My God," said the father in a harsh whisper, "I forgot ..." His head jerked around, swiveling along the length of the street.

"Dad, can we go? I'm cold."

The father nodded, but stood, trying to comprehend what he had just experienced.

Puzzled, and a little frightened, the boy took his father's hand. "Dad! Let's go home!"

The echoes of laughter, clattering runners, and shouts of joy faded. The father pressed the

palm of his hand against his face.

"Let's go home!" shouted the boy.

"Yeah, okay, son. We'll go."

"Not that way," said the boy as his father took a step toward the lighted house. "We parked over there."

"Right, over there. What am I thinking of?" said the father, turning away in confusion. "You ... you know I used to live in that house, the one with the lights, second from the corner."

"I know," said the boy impatiently, "you told me."

They got into the car and the father put the keys into the ignition. He took a deep breath and glanced at his son from the corner of his eye. "I bet you think I'm sorta crazy ..."

he said with a forced laugh.

The boy didn't answer. He looked straight ahead.

"We used to play here a lot," the father said in a somewhat husky voice. "My friends ... in summer we rode our bikes, in winter it was sleds. Sometimes, with the sleds, we'd hook a ride on the bumper of a car and get a free ride for a block or more."

The boy shifted uneasily. "Where are they now?" he asked. "Your friends ..."

"Well, I don't know. I think some of them have moved out of town, and one or two have, ah, passed on ... Son, I just wanted you to know about this street, how it was ..."

The father looked out at the houses snugly nestled in purple shadows. The raked trees held the darkening sky in a thousand skeleton fingers. My street, thought the father, mine forever—where yesterday and tomorrow are today—forever. A wave of green washed around the car. It was suddenly summer. Then the gold and bronze leaves of fall drifted by on the smoky breeze. He wanted to tell his son about the magic of this street, but that, he knew, was impossible. The street was his alone. Someday, perhaps, his son would find his own magic street.

The car eased out from the curb and glided away. Its taillights grew smaller and smaller in the distance. Overhead, the cold clear stars hung like frosty diamonds above the treetops, exactly as they had forty winters ago.

The street was very quiet. It lay frozen in a backwater of time. The present was but a light, icetrusted patina on the past. Somewhere in the distance a woman's voice called a name again and again across the snow-shrouded yards. Winter darkness came, and then, after a while, the yellow light in the two kitchen windows of the second house from the corner blinked out. [E]





# The Autumn Visitors

by

Frank Belknap Long

A BRAND NEW TALE OF LOVE AND TRANSCENDENCE  
BY THE SUBJECT OF THIS MONTH'S TZ INTERVIEW.

**I**n early October everything about East Glencove suits me fine. Most of the beachfront cottages are boarded up, and there comes a time when you can do without picnic litter bobbing about in the surf and the gleeful shouts of bathers returning across the long, circular beach with their children turning somersaults on the sand.

If that should make me sound like a grouch, I hasten to add that Janice shares my preference for East Glencove at its early autumn best, with wood smoke arising from the tall pines on the landward side of the village, and with nothing to obstruct the view on the seaward side but an occasional flurry of nesting gulls above scattered rocks—stepping-stones for a giant?—whitened by their droppings.

There was far more to it than that: serenity, an almost unbelievable kind of togetherness, with the rest of the world blotted out, the tube banished—save for the briefest of news flashes—until No-

vember, at least. Add surf-line jogging, discussions of both old and new books, and then, perhaps, supper on the beach.

"Peter, you've browned the potatoes to perfection. But the panfish could be a little crisper. Just two more flip-flops would have done the trick."

Fifteen or twenty minutes of relaxation in beach chairs, with coffee mugs in our hands, listening to the wind ruffling the sand and watching the tide gain a half-inch in its slow climb up the beach. Then back to the cottage, amidst a scuttling of fiddler crabs, to sit on the porch while the twilight deepens about us and the distant winking of harbor lights precedes the coming of darkness and a wilderness of stars.

We usually go inside at nine or nine-thirty. But on this particular evening there was a total absence of mosquitoes and not the slightest chill in the air, and there seemed to be a kind of unspoken

# The Autumn Visitors

agreement between us to stay right where we were for at least another hour.

I got up and opened the screen door just enough to let Princess come bouncing out, then settled down again at Janice's side, wondering why just patting the head of a shaggy dog could make a great many women more talkative and warm. The instant she nestled close to me, I gave her waist a sudden, tight squeeze.

"If you had one wish right now, what would it be?" I asked.

"I think you know," she said.

"Guessing is never quite the same thing as knowing," I said. "If you put what you hinted at this morning in more positive terms—"

"All right," she said, before I could go on. "I'd like at least one more full year at the cottage. Risk taking is good for us, and we're still young enough to afford it."

Happiness, in the unaging years when creative drives are at their peaks, can be afforded in more ways than one, and I knew she didn't just mean economically. In fact, that consideration was all-too-often absent from her thoughts.

"In the past six months I've sold only enough paintings to take care of the basics, including the rent," I reminded her. "New England art dealers are funny that way. They can be reckless one season, overcautious the next.

"As a village handyman I'd be a complete flop," I added, for emphasis. "I'm more the Van Gogh ear-slicing type."

"Oh, come on," she countered. "You've enough resilience to be good at anything you undertake, if it should ever come to that. It's *me* you're talking to."

"Flattery will get you nowhere," I began—and stopped.

Princess had gotten up and reached the door in two long leaps. She was pawing at the screen, the hair bristling along her back and a fierce growl coming from her throat. What made it astonishing was the simple fact that a household guardian she was not, and would have greeted a burglar, under ordinary circumstances, with the friendliest of tail waggings.

I stopped Janice from leaping to her feet with a whispered warning. "Stay put and don't make a sound. I think we have a visitor. Did you lock the back door?"

"I did," she assured me. "But the kitchen window is open."

"Don't follow me before I make sure," I cautioned. "It could be a squirrel or a bat."

I was at the door too quickly to give her a chance to protest. The instant I flung it wide, Princess went streaking across the sun parlor to the living room like a suddenly released attack dog.

The sun parlor was moonlight-flooded, but there was nothing in it I could have used as a weapon. My best bet, if I needed one—and I felt I might—was the small bronze statue on a pedestal just inside the living room, and as I felt along the wall for the light switch I could hear Princess making growling and scuffling sounds in the darkness.

The instant the light came on, I saw that Princess was alone. She was running up and down in front of the fireplace as if she had scented something unusual there, shaking the two unlighted logs a little and scraping the bricks with her claws. High above her the long, dangling legs of Dolly Madison also shook a little.

A word as to Dolly Madison. It was easy to think of her as a doll whittled from wood by human hands, or even as a factory-manufactured toy. Actually she was neither. Janice had picked her up on the beach and set her down on the mantel two weeks previously with a prideful-discovery look, for she delighted in pieces of driftwood so miraculously shaped that they conjured up visions of a goblin-haunted sea strand where all manner of night-roaming shapes held revel and fled at the first flush of dawn.

After a heavy storm, New England beaches had many such driftwood treasures, but Dolly Madison—the historical-sounding name had appealed to Janice as both appropriate and amusing—came as close as any natural object could to a perfectly formed human doll, with evenly spaced knots for eyes, a smiling mouth, and exceptionally long legs.

"Princess, be quiet!" Janice said, almost at my



For a moment  
I thought the living room  
was just as we  
had left it.  
Then I saw  
that there was the  
faintest of glimmerings  
in the direction of  
the mantel.  
Something was moving.

elbow, having ignored my plea that she remain a moment longer outside. "What in heaven's name has gotten into you?"

At the sound of her voice Princess ceased to growl and rear up, and flattened herself against the floor in unmistakable contrition.

"You took a foolish risk," I told her. "Something must have excited her, and the kitchen window is still open."

"No, I just closed it," Janice said.

It was hard to believe that some small creature of the night could have flown—or crawled—in and out again this quickly; so I bent without a word and looked under the logs in the fireplace.

Nothing.

"She was bristling with rage," I said. "The more I see of dogs and cats the more convinced I become that they're almost as crazy as people."

"We can thank our lucky stars it wasn't a burglar," Janice said. "You're making too much of it. I didn't start the evening tired, but now I'd just as soon go right upstairs to bed."

We went upstairs together, with the kind of understanding that required few words. It often takes very little to spoil an evening, and I suddenly felt just as tired. Princess got up at the same time and ambled back into the sun parlor, and I had the feeling she would soon be making brief growling sounds in her sleep, as dogs often do when they're having bad dreams.

Janice was the first to fall asleep, perhaps because she was really tired and I had to work at it. For ten or fifteen minutes I twisted and turned, listening to the wind rattling the windowpanes and counting the newest equivalent of sheep—credit card figures emerging from a computer that were plunging me deeper into the red every time I stopped at a gas station.

Then, perhaps twenty minutes in all after Janice had reached over and clicked off the light at the head of the bed, I fell into a deep slumber. It probably started off dreamless, because I lost, with a split-second abruptness, all awareness of Janice as a shining light at the center of my life—that cast a radiance on the road ahead, making its occasional

rockiness seem less of a hazard.

I had no idea *exactly* what time it was when I woke up. The bedroom was still in total darkness, without the slightest hint of lightening in the region of the windows. But I can usually tell when dawn is not far away because there is a great difference between a short and a long sleep, and there seems to be something, deep in my mind, that records time's passing with some degree of exactitude, even during slumber.

Happily or unhappily, as the case may be, emotions can't be clocked in the same general way, and I felt excited and apprehensive immediately without knowing why.

Without switching on the light, I fumbled around in the darkness for my dressing gown, slippers, and a pocket flash, and less than three minutes later was descending to the living room in a silence so absolute I could have heard a mouse stirring.

For a moment I thought the living room was just as we had left it. Then I saw that there was the faintest of glimmerings in the direction of the mantel. Something was moving, something directly below Dolly Madison; I could just make out the dim outlines of her driftwood torso and long, dangling legs in what had ceased to be a region of inky blackness.

When visibility is very faint, a few seconds of intense staring can often make a barely visible object stand out with greater sharpness, and the moving object suddenly became a small human figure, arms outstretched, leaping up and down as if making a frantic effort to reach Dolly Madison's dangling legs and pull her from the mantel. Turning slowly toward me in the bright circle of radiance was a little girl who could not have been more than six or seven. She was blinking a little, but did not appear startled, as if she believed herself still surrounded by darkness. Though she was staring directly at me, she seemed all but unaware of my presence.

I had never before seen a child's face so radiant, so classically beautiful. There was something almost Grecian about it, as though it had been taken from a buried urn by some ancient magician and transformed into a flesh-and-blood reality. She was barefoot and wore a flowing white gown of silken texture without adornments of any kind, giving her an almost angelic aspect.

Suddenly, before I could take a step toward her, she was gone. Where she had been I saw only the bricks of the fireplace.

A ghost? I refused to believe it. My total skepticism was reinforced by what I knew, from considerable recent reading, about the nature of nightmares. Nightmares come from a different part of the sleeping brain than do ordinary dreams. They

# The Autumn Visitors

are born in the dark underside of human consciousness. Often frightful, they can occasionally embrace aspects of breathtaking loveliness along with the terror, perhaps in compensation for what would otherwise be sanity-threatening.

Nightmares also leave penumbras. You may awaken from one and, for several minutes, see a very solid person standing at the foot of your bed.

Of course, for a penumbra to occur so belatedly, after I'd gotten up, taken a moment to fumble around for my dressing gown, and descended the stairs to switch on a pocket flash was, to say the least, unusual. But it could not be ruled out as a possibility, particularly after the bad time Princess had put me through earlier that evening.

The nightmare possibility seemed greatly reinforced by the simple fact that Princess had failed to awaken and come bounding into the living room in hair-bristling agitation. Whatever had enraged her earlier in the region of the mantel would have had to be an occurrence of a different sort, for dogs can sense a menace even when they are deep in sleep, and she could hardly have mistaken an image my entirely human mind had conjured up for an objective physical threat. Telepathy on that level might conceivably exist, but I have always doubted it.

Although the child's lips had not moved when the light had swept over her, five lines from Swinburne had come unbidden into my mind:

*If the golden-crested wren  
Were a nightingale, why then  
Something seen and heard by men  
Would be half as sweet as when  
Laughs a child of seven.*

To a painter, poet or musician there is only one command that must be heeded: *Get it down as quickly as possible*—on paper, canvas, or a musical keyboard, as your calling dictates.

As I hurried across the living room to the door of the disgracefully cluttered room I called a studio, Princess awoke at last and came padding out of the sun parlor. She sniffed around for a moment at the base of the mantel as if disturbed by something that had been there, but her agitation wasn't remotely comparable to what it had been the first time.

"Go back to sleep," I said. "Your big moment has passed." Without waiting to see if she accepted that as a command, I went into the studio and shut the door.

A feeling of wonder and the creativity that so often accompanies it could, I knew from experience, pass quickly, and I lost no time in getting a drawing board in place on one of the three tables and pinning a sheet of drawing paper to it. I sketched swiftly, almost casually, not striving too hard, intent chiefly on capturing a certain look on the

child's face as she had turned to gaze at me.

A few deft strokes made me feel that I was doing very well indeed, and I was close to completing the sketch to my entire satisfaction when Princess began barking again, just as loudly—and fiercely—as she had done hours earlier.

I got up abruptly, almost upsetting the table, and unpinned the drawing with shaking fingers. I carried it with me as I strode to the door and flung it wide. For some crazy reason I could not bear to relinquish anything so precious after having succeeded so well with it.

Princess was no longer in sight, but I could hear her still fiercely barking outside the cottage. There was no mistaking her direction. I crossed the living room in a swift stride and was running when I passed through the sun parlor and out the front door to the porch.

Princess was halfway down the beach, in clear pursuit of three human figures that seemed to be moving at least twice as rapidly, making it impossible for her to overtake them. Two of the figures were quite tall and clearly those of adults. One appeared to be a woman with a slim waist and large hips, the other a man of heavier build and large, straight shoulders. They were carrying between them a very small figure who was twisting and turning as if in violent protest at being hurried off so relentlessly.

Beyond them—so close to the surf line that it was occasionally washed at its base by a wave—a wedge-shaped object at least thirty feet in height caught and held the moonlight. Despite the glow which made it stand out against the night sky, it remained as outwardly featureless as a shattered, storm-tossed fragment of a ship, or it might easily have been some other kind of wreckage. Still, in some hard-to-define way, there was something disturbing, *different*, about it.

Abruptly the tall figures came to a halt and turned to look behind them, and in great, bounding leaps Princess took advantage of that to shorten the distance between them. Still barking furiously, she was almost upon them when there was a flash of light so blinding that I had to throw my arms across my eyes to protect them from the glare.

When I took the risk of staring out across the beach again, the light had vanished and Princess was gone. Where her last furious leap had carried her there was nothing but a slowly rising spiral of smoke.

I'm far from sure exactly what mad impulse prompted me to leap down from the porch and race wildly across the sand in pursuit of what I could no longer believe were merely phantoms of the mind. Nothing had prepared me for this fiery destruction, for a running, leaping dog that vanished in a burst of flame, and my mind was filled with a rage which





blinded me to all danger and made me feel that I *must know more.*

The two tall figures had turned now, as if the loss of my beloved pet had meant little or nothing to them, and were continuing on toward the wedge-shaped object, the very small figure still dangling between them. Though her face was obscured by the interplay of light and shadow close to the surf line, I had no doubt at all that it was the child whose wondrously radiant countenance I had seen before. She seemed to be struggling even more frantically to free herself, and it was easy for me to picture her succeeding and fleeing back toward the cottage in the moonlight, her tiny child's voice shrill with terror.

In no clearly conscious way did the thought of rescuing and protecting her keep me racing after the figures, for a phantom she still might have been, despite all my reasoning to the contrary, and no man with a firm grasp on reality goes to the rescue of a phantom. But deep in my mind some such thought must have been stirring, or my rage would have been less overwhelming.

I was not very far from where Princess had met her end when I began to feel the heat. I felt it in my legs at first: a tingling warmth swiftly creeping up my thighs and spreading through the lower part of my body until it reached my chest. It soon became agonizing—and very frightening—in the region of my heart, forcing me to come to an abrupt halt, for I am not so young that the possibility of a coronary attack could be shrugged off as extremely unlikely.

When it failed to diminish, I swung about and retreated back across the beach for twenty-five or thirty feet. It became just a tingling warmth again. I retreated a few feet more, and it was gone.

It was then that I heard the voice. In some respects it was like a voice heard in a dream, loud and quite distinct, but with something about it which made it impossible for me to tell whether it was coming from a distance or was close to my ear. It could even have been a wholly subjective voice, audible to me alone. I was only sure of one thing: it was a voice too deep in timbre to have come from the vocal cords of a woman, unless she were an amazon indeed. There were pauses and breaks in it, as if the speaker were experiencing difficulty in overcoming some immense barrier.

"We have traveled far ... and ... and ... this child is our child," came slowly, with a difficul-

ty evident from the first. "Stubborn ... headstrong ... and ... and ... too young to stay alert to danger. If we had not found her in time—"

The voice paused, as if my look of stunned disbelief had underscored the need for a less abrupt beginning.

"Thought communication without energy exchange ... energy contact ... ceases to be a problem when once you understand that what you think of as space is no more than a shapeless flowing. It is without beginning or end, and thought alone gives it substance and creates parallel universes filled with a vast multitude of energized forms. In our universe there is no matter ... only matter's opposite. But both are forms of energy created by thought alone."

There was another pause, slightly briefer than the first. "We have acquired some knowledge of your speech ... your customs ... your habits of thought. You are quick to doubt ... but just as quick to let doubt be replaced by understanding."

"Our child ... lost a toy precious to her. There are times when the yearning of the very young ... left desolate by loss ... can break through barriers that are protectively strong ... as they set out on some small quest of their own. Our child went roaming in search of her lost toy ... and discovered the shape on your mantel ... The resemblance was very close."

"From the sea it came, and there are ... thought patterns in your universe that are just as close ... to the heart of a child. Pebbles oddly shaped ... shining shells ... Do not your children stop as well ... entranced ... treasuring them as playthings in their secret thoughts? And if one such plaything should bear a close resemblance to a lost bedtime companion ... greatly loved ... do you not see? She leapt up toward it, again and again, but if she had touched it ... we would have been left childless to grieve."

For the third time there ensued a pause. Perhaps the tall figure knew that a brief silence can have an eloquence of its own when understanding is being sought.

"There is a shop on one of your village streets ... filled with glassware and fragile antiques," the voice went on. "I am sure you have visited it more than once. Just inside the door, as you know, there is a sign which reads: *Do not touch* ... It was put there to warn summer visitors to be careful."

"We must be careful too. But unlike the sum-

# The Autumn Visitors

mer visitors, we cannot touch anything in your universe of stars and remain as we are. And if you touch us, you too will be gone in a sudden burst of flame. I have said that we are matter's opposite, and there is no way of preventing what happens when the two collide.

"We travel with safeguards to warn and protect us ... but a very young child can forget and become careless. We were twice in the cottage searching for her, and it was our presence that first excited your dog. In its last leap it did not quite reach us ... but it came too close. In such an emergency ... confronted by such a danger ... we can widen the zone of destructiveness just enough to make actual contact impossible for as long as the threat exists. It is one of the safeguards. There are several others ..."

The two tall figures were standing at the base of the wedge-shaped object now, with the blaze of star-fields inculcably mirrored in shifting patterns on the incoming tide. The child had become quiet.

"In our universe, as in yours," the voice proclaimed with unmistakable pride, "there can be no rest for the exploring mind. To pursue knowledge and seek to know more about the nature of thought, we must dare greatly and travel far ... refusing to turn back ... though obstacles may arise and griefs multiply ..."

The two tall figures seemed suddenly to move even closer to the wedge-shaped object, or possibly its shadowy bulk had moved closer to them. I could only be sure of one thing. All at once, amidst the glimmerings of the incoming tide, both the figures and the object were gone.

For a long moment, as I walked back across the beach to the cottage, staggering a little, it was to doubt the reality of everything I'd just seen and heard. Perhaps it had been too many hours spent in the blazing summer sunlight on the beach, in a man who had always been a little careless about his health and had allowed himself to forget that his robust self-image was inappropriate beyond a certain age.

There are a few realities—not many, perhaps, but a few—so incontestable that they withstand every attempt to brand them as false; and this was one. Princess was gone. Her presence on the beach, her barking, had been too terribly real for me to doubt what I had seen. Her final barks still echoed in my ears; I still recalled the blinding flare of light that had forced me to cover my eyes.

Was Janice still asleep? I hoped so. I would climb the stairs, slip quietly between the sheets, and take her in my arms, telling her simply that I had heard a noise and gone downstairs to investigate. Just that, and nothing more.

It was not to be.

The instant I ascended the porch I saw that the light was on in the sun parlor and that she was moving about close to the door. She must have either seen me through the screen or heard me moving on the porch, because before I could decide what it might be best to tell her she came rushing out with something in her hand that I immediately recognized.

"Oh, darling, darling, where have you been?" she asked. "And when did you make this drawing?"

I'd completely forgotten dropping the picture in my alarmed dash across the sun parlor. But it didn't matter, I told myself. The loss of Princess did matter, but that, too, could wait. I'd have to make up some story, I knew, that would ease the blow; it wouldn't be the first time a dog had strayed from a beachfront cottage and never been found. Beyond the village there were—well, at least six miles of unbroken woodland.

My wife gave me a quick, excited hug. "This is the most beautiful child I've ever seen," she said. "The next time you shut yourself up in that windowless room you call a studio without telling me that some wild kind of inspiration has taken hold of you, I'll start keeping secrets from you."

"Well—"

She waved me to silence. "I could do that now, but I'm not going to. I'm going to tell you something that will rock you back on your heels. I saw that same little girl in a dream tonight, and it happened once before. I'd have recognized her face anywhere. Oh, darling, darling, don't you see? It has to mean something important for—for both of us. You're a finer artist than you dream. This drawing proves it for all time, and if we stay at the cottage for another year—"

She broke off abruptly to stare out for a moment across the beach, as if she saw on its shining expanse, in ghostly form, the clambakes we'd enjoyed in the past and could enjoy again, and the dolphins sporting playfully between the rock islands just beyond, silvered by the moonlight now, but sun-gilded at dawn.

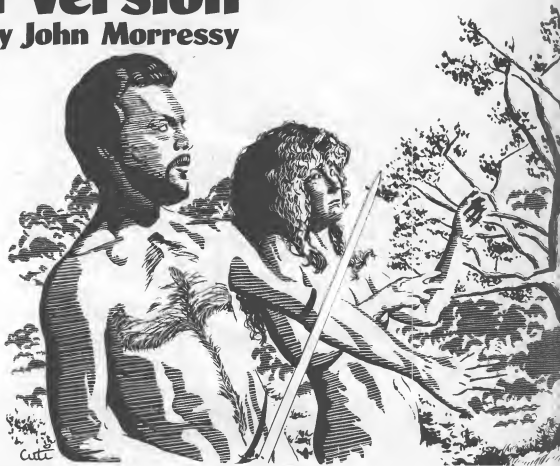
But it wasn't the clambakes or the dolphins or the now nesting gulls that she saw when she spoke again.

"We've both always wanted children, but we've let foolish things stand in the way. The fear that because we married late we're too old to take on such a responsibility, and the uncertainties of childbearing at my age. But I've a strong feeling now that if we stay here just one more year—perhaps much longer, but at least another year—something quite glorious will happen."

Abruptly, without saying a word, I put my arms around her and held her so tightly that she winced. It was one of those miraculous moments when disagreements dwindle to the vanishing point.

# Final Version

by John Morressy



## GOD HELP US, IT'S ANOTHER ADAM-AND-EVE STORY— AND AT LONG LAST, ONE THAT MAKES SENSE!

*This is the way it was told for the last time:*

**H**is days were full of work, but the life here was good. Each day brought new discoveries. On his long, strong legs he ranged far over this unfamiliar world, feeding a curiosity that grew with each day's nourishment. The woman, too, devoted her time to exploring, and between them they had already learned much about their new home.

After his long day of questing he returned hungry and dusty, but in good spirits. She had come back before him, and at the sight of him she brought out food. As they ate, he told her of his day's findings.

"Did you see any new animals?" she asked.

"Some flying creatures. They're beautiful things."

"Take me with you tomorrow. I want to see them."

"You can name them. You're better at that than I am."

When they finished eating, he asked, "Did you find anything new by the river?"

She smiled and shook her head, and the long waves of her hair moved gently to brush first one side of her face, then the other. She swept her hair back over her bare shoulders and said, "I didn't go to the river. I went up the mountain."

"To the top?"

"To the very top."

He had been reclining on an elbow. At her news, he sat up and reached out to her in a quick gesture, not of anger but of concern. "You know the law. At the top of the mountain . . . you should never go there. Not alone, certainly."

She rose lightly to her feet and tugged at his hand. "Come up with me, then, and see what I have to show you."

"The mountaintop is not a good place. Not even when we're together."

"There's no danger. I know there isn't."

He still did not move. "The light . . ." he said uncertainly.

"The light will be with us for a long time. Come." She tugged again, and lie reluctantly arose and followed her up the gentle slope.

They reached the clearing on the mountaintop



in a short time. He stopped, but she walked on, into the center of the clearing, where the bright bush stood alone, and picked two of the thumb-sized golden fruits. He cried out and rushed forward as she placed one in her mouth and bit down, but he was too late to stop her.

"Why did you do this? Remember the warning—if we eat this fruit, we die!" he said.

"I've eaten it before this, and I'm not dead. Try it," she said, extending the golden fruit to him.

"No. I can't."

"We were told, 'Eat this fruit and you die.' I've eaten it, and yet I live. Try it. Please."

"And if we die?"

"At least we die together. Would you rather live on here without me?"

That was a thought he could not bear. Without a word, he took the fruit from her fingers and placed it in his mouth. It burst at the pressure of his tongue, and rich sweet juice flooded his mouth with a savor unlike anything he had ever tasted before. He gave a little involuntary moan of delight at the sensation, and, without thinking, reached out to pluck one, two, then a handful more of the golden fruit, and the woman beside him laughed and did the same.

He turned to her, and another new sensation

swept through him at the sight of her. He was not sure how long they had been together, but since that first drowsy afternoon when he awoke and found her beside him, her head nestled in the crook of his outflung arm, he had never looked on her with the feeling he now felt. The glow of her smooth skin, the soft curves of her shoulders and breasts, the round smoothness of her belly, the long gentle line of her thighs were as new sights to him, and the look in her eyes drew him closer. He placed his hands on her shoulders and pulled her to him.

"You are the most beautiful of all things living. I never saw this before, but I see it now," he said.

They sank down on a soft bed of grass and explored together the wonder of their newly discovered bodies. They found a shared joy they had not dreamed of before, and they blessed the golden fruit that had awakened their sleeping senses.

**T**ogether, in the early twilight, they walked down the mountainside to their shelter. Her arm was around his waist, while he encircled her shoulder with his arm and drew her head against him. They walked in silence, slowly.

At the foot of the mountain they stopped. A light flickered and flared bright under the darken-

## Final Version

ing sky and came to rest before them. He stepped forward in a protective stance as the light dimmed and took the form of one of the guardians of the place.

"What do you want here?" the man said.

The guardian's voice was like the rolling of great boulders down the mountainside. The rush of air from its pinions swept the fallen leaves past the man and blew the hair back from his face.

"You have broken the law," the guardian said.

The man was afraid. He wanted to fall back before that awesome figure. But he thought of the woman, and the punishment that might befall them, and anger rose in him stronger than the fear.

"What we have done is not your concern. Get out of our way," he said.

"Do you defy me?" the guardian roared, lowering a hand to the sword at its side.

"It is you who defy me, by intruding on the place that was given to me. Leave us," the man ordered, taking a step forward.

The guardian drew its sword. The man stooped, lifted a heavy stone from the ground, and hurled it with all his strength. It struck the guardian full in the chest, staggering it. The sword whirled free, glinting in the dying light. The woman sprang to snatch up the fallen blade.

"Now leave," she said to the stricken guardian. "And never intrude on us again."

The guardian hesitated, and seemed about to speak, but the man stepped forward and the woman brandished the sword, and the guardian faded away. The woman came to his side and put her arms around him. "You were brave," she said.

"Until now, I feared them."

"But no more."

"No, no more." He looked down at her, bemused. "Before I even raised my hand against the creature, I knew it was beaten."

"Do I make you so strong?"

"You've shown me why I must be strong."

He took the sword from her. Hand in hand, more watchful now, they descended the remainder of the way.

As they reached their shelter, the skies darkened. A wind rose, and its first faint whisper grew in an instant to a roar. Sudden drops of rain struck like flung pellets against their naked flesh. A peal of thunder shook the ground under their feet, and in a flash of lightning that seared the trees around them, their Creator appeared, His blazing face drawn into lines of wrath.

"What have you done?" He said in a voice that overbore the thunder.

The man stood fast before Him, the sword in his hand. "I drove out an intruder," he said.

"You have done more."

"Accuse me, then."

Thunder roared all around, and lightning lanced the ground at his very feet, but the man stood firm. At last came the accusation. "You have eaten the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. This was forbidden you, and yet you did it. Now you face My punishment."

"Why should I be punished?"

"Do you deny eating the golden fruit?" the voice of the Creator thundered.

"I deny doing wrong. You gave me this place, and told me I was master here. Why should anything be forbidden to me where I am master?"

"Do you feel no guilt? No shame?"

"I do not!" the man said, and took a step forward. "I will enjoy the fruits of my own garden as I choose. Send guardians to threaten me, and I'll treat them as I treated the first one."

"Would you attack Me, then?"

The man let the sword fall from his hand. "No, not You. Never You. I only defend what You gave me for my own."

The Creator raised His hand and pointed at the man, who steeled himself for a blast that did not come. Instead, in a solemn voice, like retreating thunder, the Creator said, "You have broken My law and struck down My servant, and you show no remorse. Will you kneel before Me and beg forgiveness?"

"No. I have done no wrong."

"I can destroy you."

"Then destroy me, and make a creature that will crawl before You," the man said.

"And a new companion for him," said the woman. She came to the man's side and placed her hand tight in his.

The wind fell, and the storm passed, and for a moment all was still. Side by side, the man and the woman awaited their doom.

"At last!" the Creator cried into the silence.

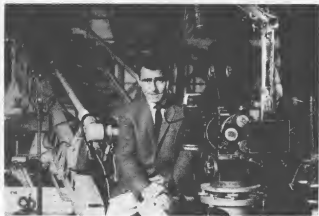
"At last!" He cried again, and the darkness lifted. A joyous light shone forth from His countenance and illumined all around the man and woman and embraced them. "Over and over, on worlds beyond numbering, I have created you. On every world I put you to a test. And of all who take the test, none has yet had the courage to accept the consequences. Eat the fruit, and you can become as I. They could not bear this. When I faced them, they crawled, before Me, and cringed, and whimpered for mercy. I demanded guilt and shame, and they gave it to Me, and they live in thrall to it forever. But you gave Me courage."

He stepped closer, and held out His arms. They came to Him, and He enfolded them in light and pressed them to Him. "On a million million worlds I have slaves and worshipers," He said softly. "But here, at last, I have My children." 17

# TV's Twilight Zone: Part Ten

CONTINUING MARC SCOTT ZICREE'S  
SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE TO THE ENTIRE  
TWILIGHT ZONE TELEVISION SERIES,  
COMPLETE WITH ROD SERLING'S OPENING  
AND CLOSING NARRATIONS

*"There is a fifth dimension, beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call the Twilight Zone."*



87. A PIANO IN THE HOUSE

Written by Earl Hamner, Jr.

Producer: Buck Houghton

Director: David Greene

Dir. of Photography:

George T. Clemens

Music: Stock

Cast

Fitzgerald Fortune: Barry Morse

Esther Fortune: Joan Hackett

Marge Moore: Muriel Landers

Marvin the Butler: Cyril Delevanti

Gregory Walker: Don Durant

Throckmorton: Phil Coolidge

*"Mr. Fitzgerald Fortune, theater critic and cynic-at-large, on his way to a birthday party. If he knew what is in store for him, he probably wouldn't go. Because before this evening is over, that cranky old piano is going to play those piano roll blues, with some effects that could happen only in the Twilight Zone."*

Fortune buys his wife a player piano for her birthday, then discovers it has magical properties—its music reveals people's hidden faces. A hard-hearted curio shop owner gushes with sentimentality; a solemn butler bursts out with gales of laughter. Using it on his wife, Fortune discovers that she actually detests him. Fortune decides that the piano is the ideal tool to humiliate his wife's party guests. Under the music's spell, a seemingly jaded playwright admits to being passionately in love with Fortune's wife. A boisterous fat woman

reveals fantasies of being a delicate, graceful little girl and a beloved, beautiful snowflake. Delighted with his cruel game, Fortune hands his wife another roll to put on the piano, but she switches to a different piece, one that bewitches Fortune and strips him of his facade. In truth, he is no more than a frightened sadistic child. Disgusted and embarrassed, the guests depart—along with Fortune's wife.

*"Mr. Fitzgerald Fortune, a man who went searching for concealed persons and found himself—in the Twilight Zone."*



## 88. TO SERVE MAN

Written by Rod Serling  
Based on the story by Damon Knight  
Producer: Buck Houghton  
Director: Richard L. Bare  
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
Music: Stock  
Cast  
Chambers: Lloyd Bochner  
Kanamit: Richard Kiel  
Pat: Susan Cummings  
Citizen Gregori: Theodore Marcuse  
With Will J. White, Gene Benton,  
Bartlett Robinson, Carlton Young,  
Hardie Albright, Robert Tafur,  
Lomax Study, Nelson Olmstead,  
Charles Tannen, James L. Wellman,  
Adrienne Marden, and Jeanne Evans

*"Respectfully submitted for your perusal—a Kanamit. Height: a little over nine feet. Weight: in the neighborhood of three hundred fifty pounds. Origin: unknown. Motives? Therein hangs the tale, for in just a moment we're going to ask you to shake hands, figuratively, with a Christopher Columbus from another galaxy and another time. This is the Twilight Zone."*

The Kanamits arrive on Earth with seemingly one purpose in mind: to aid mankind in every possible way by using their superior technology. They end famine, supply a cheap power source, and provide defensive force fields. Armies become obsolete. Although some distrust them, the Kanamits appear totally altruistic, a fact supported by a Kanamit book left at the U.N. Once translated, the title reads "To Serve Man." Thousands book passage to the

Kanamits' home planet, including Michael Chambers, a U.S. decoding expert. Meanwhile, however, his assistant Pat is trying to translate the Kanamit book's text. As Chambers prepares to board ship, Pat frantically rushes up. She's succeeded in her attempts—"To Serve Man" is a cookbook! Chambers tries to escape, but a Kanamit forces him into the ship, which then blasts off. Helplessly, Chambers finds himself bound for another planet—and some alien's dinner table!

*"The recollections of one Michael Chambers, with appropriate flashbacks and soliloquy. Or more simply stated, the evolution of man, the cycle of going from dust to dessert, the metamorphosis from being the ruler of a planet to an ingredient in someone's soup. It's tonight's bill of fare on the Twilight Zone."*



## 89. THE LAST RITES OF JEFF MYRTLEBANK

Written and directed by Montgomery Pittman  
Producer: Buck Houghton  
Dir. of Photography: Jack Swain  
Music: Tommy Morgan

Cast  
Jeff Myrtlebank: James Best  
Comfort Gatewood: Sherry Jackson  
Orgram Gatewood: Lance Fuller  
Mr. Peters: Dub Taylor  
Pa Myrtlebank: Ralph Moody  
Ma Myrtlebank: Ezelle Pouley  
Ma Gatewood: Helen Wallace  
With Vickie Barnes, Bill Fawcett,  
Edgar Buchanan, Mabel Forrest, Jon Lormer, Pat Hector, and Jim Houghton

*"Time, the mid-Twenties. Place, the Midwest—the southernmost section of the Midwest. We were just witnessing a funeral, a funeral that didn't come off exactly as planned, due to a slight fallout—from the Twilight Zone."*

During his funeral, Jeff Myrtlebank abruptly sits up in the coffin, alive and well. Jeff claims to be the same as always, but as time goes by, others have doubts. Jeff is exhibiting new traits: a love of hard work, skill at fisticuffs, and the ability to make freshly picked flowers wilt in his grasp. After Jeff bests Orgram Gatewood, the brother of his fiancée Comfort, in a fight, a group of townspeople come to the conclusion that Jeff is actually an evil spirit. They decide to run him out of the county. Although previously frightened of Jeff, Comfort rushes off to warn him. Jeff demands that Comfort decide whether she'll stick by him. As the men arrive, Comfort agrees to marry him. Jeff tells the men that he and his wife-to-be intend

to stay. If he is Jeff Myrtlebank they have nothing to worry about; but if he's a supernatural being, then they'd better treat him and his family well—for with his magic he can cause them no end of distress. Feigning reassurance but actually terrified, the townfolk depart. Jeff explains to Comfort that he lied to them; he's as human as she is. But while he says this, he lights a match—without striking it!

*"Jeff and Comfort are still alive today, and their only son is a United States senator who's noted as an uncommonly shrewd politician—and some believe he must have gotten his education in the Twilight Zone."*



## 90. THE FUGITIVE

Written by Charles Beaumont  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Richard L. Bare  
 Dir. of Photography: Jack Swain  
 Music: Stock  
*Cast*  
 Old Ben: J. Pat O'Malley  
 Jenny: Susan Gordon  
 Mrs. Gann: Nancy Kulp  
 Man #1: Wesley Lau  
 Man #2: Paul Tripp  
 Howie: Stephen Talbot  
 Pitcher: Johnny Eiman  
 Doctor: Russ Bender

*"It's been said that science fiction and fantasy are two different things: science fiction, the improbable made possible; fantasy, the impossible made probable. What would you have if you put these two different things together? Well, you'd have an old man named Ben, who knows a lot of tricks most people don't know, and a little girl named Jenny who loves him, and a journey—into the heart of the Twilight Zone."*

Two men are looking for Old Ben, a mysterious figure who can change into anything from mouse to fly to hideous monster from outer space. Ben tells Jenny, who lives with her aunt and wears a leg brace, that he is a fugitive from outer space; the men are his pursuers. Before fleeing, Ben uses a device to fix Jenny's leg. The two men arrive and use a similar device to make Jenny deathly ill. The trap works; Ben is forced to return and heal Jenny. The truth then becomes clear: Ben is not a fugitive

from justice, but the beloved monarch of an alien planet. The two men are subjects sent to plead with him to return to the throne. Reluctantly, Ben agrees to go with them, but the men refuse to let Jenny come along. Suddenly, Gann has an idea. Ben is allowed a minute alone with her. When the men return, they find two Jennys! Afraid to take the wrong one, they are forced to take both.

*"Mrs. Gann will be in for a big surprise when she finds this [photo of a handsome young man] under Jenny's pillow, because Mrs. Gann has more temper than imagination. She'll never dream that this is a picture of Old Ben as he really looks, and it will never occur to her that eventually her niece will grow up to be an honest-to-goodness queen—somewhere in the Twilight Zone."*



## 91. LITTLE GIRL LOST

Written by Richard Matheson  
 Based on his short story  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Paul Stewart  
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
 Music: Bernard Herrmann  
*Cast*  
 Bill: Charles Aidman  
 Chris Miller: Robert Sampson  
 Ruth Miller: Sarah Marshall  
 Tina: Tracy Stratford  
 Tina's Voice: Rhoda Williams

*"Missing: one frightened little girl. Name: Betina Miller. Description: six years of age, average height and build, light brown hair, quite pretty. Last seen being tucked into bed by her mother a few hours ago. Last heard—aye, there's the rub, as Hamlet put it. For Betina Miller can be heard quite clearly, despite the rather curious fact that she can't be seen at all. Present location? Let's say for the moment—in the Twilight Zone."*

When his daughter Tina rolls underneath her bed and disappears, Chris Miller summons the aid of his friend Bill, a physicist. Soon thereafter, the family dog bolts under the bed and disappears, too. Bill suspects Tina has fallen through a hole into another dimension, a theory borne out when he puts his hand through a seemingly solid wall. Chris reaches his arm through in an attempt to grab Tina. Inadvertently he pitches forward, falling halfway through the hole—and finds himself in a world of bizarrely, distorted

sights and sounds. He calls the dog, who brings Tina to him. Chris grabs hold of both Tina and the dog, and Bill pulls the three of them out. And none too soon—the hole has closed; the wall is solid. "Another few seconds," Bill tells Chris, "and half of you would have been here and the other half..."

*"The other half where? The fourth dimension? The fifth? Perhaps. They never found the answer. Despite a battery of research physicists equipped with every device known to man, electronic and otherwise, no result was ever achieved, except perhaps a little more respect for and uncertainty about the mechanisms of the Twilight Zone."*





## 92. PERSON OR PERSONS UNKNOWN

Written by Charles Beaumont  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: John Brahm  
 Dir. of Photography: Robert W. Pittack  
 Music: Stock  
*Cast*  
 David Gurney: Richard Long  
 Dr. Koslenko: Frank Silvera  
 Wilma #1: Shirley Ballard  
 Wilma #2: Jukie Van Zandt  
 Woman Clerk: Betty Harford  
 Mr. Hurtubise: Ed Glover  
 Policeman: Michael Keep  
 Bank Guard: Joe Higgins  
 Mr. Cooper: John Newton

*"Cameo of a man who has just lost his most valuable possession. He doesn't know about the loss yet. In fact, he doesn't even know about the possession. Because, like most people, David Gurney has never really thought about the matter of his identity. But he's going to be thinking about it a great deal from now on, because that is what he's lost. And his search for it is going to take him into the darkest corners of the Twilight Zone."*

David Gurney wakes up to find that no one—no his wife, his fellow workers, his best friend, even his own mother—knows him. All evidence of his identity has inexplicably disappeared. He's committed to an asylum, but manages to escape and find a photograph of himself and his wife, proving that she must know him. But when the police arrive with a psychiatrist, the picture has changed and shows Gurney alone. He throws

himself on the ground—and wakes up in bed. It was all a bad dream. His wife gets out of bed and talks to him from the bathroom as she removes cream from her face. But when she emerges, Gurney is horrified to see that, although she talks and acts the same as always, she doesn't look anything at all like the wife he knows!

*"A case of mistaken identity or a nightmare turned inside out? A simple loss of memory or the end of the world? David Gurney may never find the answer, but you can be sure he's looking for it—in the Twilight Zone."*



## 93. THE GIFT

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Allen H. Miner  
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
 Music: Laurindo Almeida  
*Cast*  
 Williams: Geoffrey Horne  
 Doctor: Nico Minardos  
 Pedro: Edmund Vargas  
 Manueto: Cliff Osmond  
 Officer: Paul Mazursky  
 Guitarist: Vladimir Sokoloff  
 Rudolpho: Vito Scotti  
 Sanchez: Henry Corden  
 With Carmen D'Antonio, Lea Marmer, Joe Perry, and David Fresco

*"The place is Mexico, just across the Texas border, a mountain village held back in time by its remoteness and suddenly intruded upon by the twentieth century. And this is Pedro, nine years old, a lonely, rootless little boy, who will soon make the acquaintance of a traveler from a distant place. We are at present forty miles from the Rio Grande, but any place and all places can be the Twilight Zone."*

After crash-landing outside the village, a human-looking alien accidentally kills a police officer, but another officer manages to wound him. He stumbles into a village bar where he collapses. A sympathetic doctor removes two bullets from his chest. While recuperating, the alien—who calls himself "Mr. Williams"—is befriended by Pedro, a somber orphan who sweeps up the bar. Williams gives Pedro a gift, which he says he will explain later. Meanwhile, the bartender has notified the army as to the alien's

whereabouts. Williams tries to escape, but is cornered by soldiers and villagers. He tells Pedro to show them the gift, but it is snatched from him and set afire. The soldiers shoot Williams and kill him. The doctor takes the remnant of the gift from the fire. It reads, "Greetings to the people of Earth. We come in peace. We bring you this gift. The following chemical formula is a vaccine against all forms of cancer." The rest is burned away.

*"Madeiro, Mexico, the present. The subject: fear. The cure: a little more faith. An Rx off a shelf—in the Twilight Zone."* **17**



# The Night of the Meek

## by Rod Serling

THE ORIGINAL  
TELEVISION SCRIPT  
FIRST AIRED ON CBS-TV  
DECEMBER 23, 1960

### CAST

Henry Corwin ..... Art Carney  
Mr. Dundee ..... John Fiedler  
Old Man ..... Burt Mustin  
Officer Flaherty ..... Robert Lieb  
Sister Florence ..... Meg Wyllie  
Bartender ..... Val Avery  
Elf ..... Larrian Gillespie  
Fat Woman ..... Kay Cousins

FADE ON:

### 1. STANDARD ROAD OPENING

With vehicle smashing into  
letters, propulsion into starry  
night then PAN DOWN TO

OPENING SHOT OF PLAY.

### 2. INT. DEPARTMENT STORE DAY FULL SHOT OF A ROPED-OFF AREA

Attended by a line of restless  
kids and haggard, harried  
mothers. A large sign on a  
poster nearby proclaims that

there is, "One Shopping Day Till Christmas."

**3. PAN DOWN THE LINE OF MOTHERS AND KIDS**

Until we reach another sign hung on a velvet tassled rope that surrounds a large platform. This will tell us that "Santa Claus will return at 6 o'clock." Another PAN UP the wall to a clock which reads, "6:30." Another PAN DOWN for shot of Mr. Dundee, floor manager and potentate of all things Yule-like. He studies his wristwatch with an upraised eyebrow and ill-concealed impatience. He checks this with the clock on the wall. Then his eyes travel over to the empty Santa Claus chair.

**4. MED. CLOSE SHOT EMPTY SANTA CLAUS CHAIR**

DISSOLVE TO:

**5. INT. BAR MED. CLOSE SHOT CLOSURE ON WALL**

Which reads: "6:30." PAN DOWN to a large mirror behind the bar and the reflection of Henry Corwin sitting alone in a booth. CAMERA PANS OVER FOR A MED. CLOSE SHOT of Corwin, who sits there embarking on what is obviously a fifth or sixth drink. He's dressed in an ill-fitting, moth-eaten Santa Claus outfit, the false whiskers hanging several inches from his chin; the Santa Claus hat is a few degrees awry on his head, but with it all, the face could very well be that of Santa Claus. There's something gentle, kind, and infinitely patient and warm that is a part of the features. The bartender comes into the frame alongside the table. BARTENDER

(Points to clock)

You told me to tell yuh

when it was six-thirty. It's six-thirty.

CORWIN  
(Nods)

That's exactly what it is. Six-thirty. So?

BARTENDER  
(Very bored)

So what happens now? You turn into a reindeer?

CORWIN  
(With a slight smile)

Would that that were so! (He holds up his empty glass)

One more, huh?

BARTENDER  
(Pouring from bottle he's holding)

That's six drinks and a sandwich. You owe me four-eighths, Santa.

(Corwin takes out a single bill from his pocket, hands it to the bartender.)

**6. A DIFFERENT ANGLE CORWIN**

As seen from the other side of the table. He lifts the glass to his lips and then is suddenly conscious of someone staring at him. He turns and looks across the bar.

**7. LONG SHOT ACROSS THE BAR CORWIN'S P.O.V.**

The front window. Two little urchins, a boy and a girl under ten, are staring at him through the glass, their noses pressed against it.

**8. DIFFERENT ANGLE CORWIN**

As he swallows, looks discomfited, then turns so that his back is partially to them. Then he down the drink in a hurry, puts it down. He rises to his feet, looks across at the two little kids who, seeing that he's noticing them, take off into the night and disappear. He turns to the bartender.

CORWIN  
(Thoughtfully)

Why do you suppose there isn't really a Santa Claus?

**9. CLOSE SHOT BARTENDER**

Who's returned to the bar, looks up surprised from drying glasses.

BARTENDER  
How's that?

**10. TWO SHOT CORWIN AND BARTENDER**

CORWIN  
Why isn't there a real Santa Claus?

(He nods toward the window.)  
For kids like that?

BARTENDER  
(With a shrug)  
What am I—a philosopher? You know what your trouble is, Corwin?

(He reaches over and touches Corwin's red suit.)

You let that stupid red suit go to your head! Here's your change.

(He puts down two dimes on the counter. Corwin looks down at them, cocks his head, looks up with a sad attempt at roguishness.)

CORWIN  
I'll flip you double or nothing.

BARTENDER  
What do you think this is—Las Vegas? Come on, eat your sandwich and get out of here.

CORWIN  
I've had enough—to eat.

**11. TRACK SHOT CORWIN**  
As he rises and walks slowly toward the door, reaches it, opens it up, stares out through the half-open door to the snow that falls outside. Then he turns, is about to say something to the bartender.

**12. LONG SHOT BARTENDER**

He's busy drying glasses. His back is to Corwin.

**13. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN**  
As his eyes move over to the cash register.

# The Night of the Meek

## 14. CLOSE SHOT HIS FIVE-DOLLAR BILL

Sitting on top of the keys.

## 15. DIFFERENT ANGLE CORWIN

As he walks stealthily back to the cash register, reaches with his hand over the counter toward it.

## 16. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT HIS FINGERS

About to grab the bill when suddenly into the frame comes the bartender's hand, smacking Corwin's hand with a resounding slap.

## 17. TWO SHOT THE TWO OF THEM

As Corwin retrieves his injured fingers and puts them in his mouth.

### BARTENDER

Santa Claus, I catch you doing that one more time—I'm gonna break both your arms up to the shoulder blades. Now go on, get out of here.

(In phone)

Naw, just Santa Claus trying to hoist the joint.

## 18. DIFFERENT ANGLE CORWIN

Picks up two dimes, throws one at bartender.

### CORWIN

Thanks, Bruce.  
(As he slowly walks toward the door and then outside.)

## 19. EXT. STREET

As Henry Corwin pulls the top buttons of his thin jacket together, shivers with the cold night winter wind and the wet, freezing snowflakes that drive at him. He walks over to the curb, leans briefly against the lamp post, looks up, and blinks his eyes as the snow falls in his face, then very slowly and half-stumbling, he starts to walk

away and is suddenly gripped by the after-effects of the liquor. He reaches out to steady himself and winds up dropping to a sitting position on the curb where he sits there, bent over, his head down.

## 20. MED. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN AT THE CURB

He is suddenly conscious of other presence. He looks up very slowly, PAN SHOT UP THE STREET and legs of the two little street urchins who stand there, hand in hand.

### LITTLE GIRL

Santa Claus ... I want a carriage ... I want a dolly ... and a playhouse ... and a job for my daddy.

### LITTLE BOY

And, Santa Claus, I want a gun ... and a set of soldiers ... and a fort ... and a big turkey for our Christmas dinner.

## 21. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD CORWIN THE CHILDREN'S P.O.V.

Tears course down his face. He stumbles to land on his knees, then flings his arms around both of them, burying his face against their coats and crying, dry, harsh sobs.

## 22. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD CHILDREN

His face is buried against the children. We now hear Serling's voice in narration. SERLING'S VOICE

This is Mr. Henry Corwin, normally unemployed, who once a year takes the lead role in the uniquely American institution—that of the department store Santa Claus in a road-company version of "The Night Before Christmas." (Now the CAMERA PANS OVER to where Serling stands in front of the bar.)

## SERLING

But in just a moment, Mr. Henry Corwin, ersatz Santa Claus, will enter a strange kind of North Pole which is one part the wondrous spirit of Christmas ... and one part the magic that can only be found ... in The Twilight Zone.

FADE TO BLACK:

## OPENING BILLBOARD FIRST COMMERCIAL

FADE ON:

## 23. INT. DEPARTMENT STORE NIGHT MED. LONG SHOT

Down an aisle leading to the empty Santa Claus chair. Corwin comes into the frame and hurriedly, though unsteadily, walks toward the chair.

## 24. MED. CLOSE SHOT DUNDEE

Who steps out into the aisle, deftly, and somewhat nonchalantly grabs Corwin's arm as he passes, stopping him dead and whirling him about.

### DUNDEE

(through clenched teeth)  
Corwin, you're an hour late!

### CORWIN

I am?

### DUNDEE

Now get up on your throne and see if you can keep from disillusioning a lot of kids that not only isn't there a Santa Claus—but the one in this store happens to be a wine who'd be more at home playing Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer! Now get with it ...

(and then he spits this out like an epithet)

Santa Claus!

### WOMAN

(In a screechy voice)

You go ahead. Climb up on his lap. He won't hurt you, will you, Santa Claus? You won't hurt my little boy.

You go ahead, you tell him—

(She gives the kid a massive boot and he winds up at the foot of Corwin, who rises, weaves unsteadily, extends a wavering hand, hiccoughs.)

CORWIN

What's your name, little boy?

BOY

Percival Smithers.

CORWIN

Oh. What would you like for Christmas, Percival?

BOY

A new front name.

**25. MED. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN**

As he tilts sideways, grabs the chair for support, and then winds up sitting on the floor where he smiles up apologetically at the little boy.

**26. CLOSE SHOT LITTLE BOY**

As he turns to his mother, jerking his thumb in Corwin's direction.

PERCIVAL

Hey, Mal Santa Claus is loaded!

**27. MED. CLOSE SHOT WOMAN**

As she rips the rope aside, barges into the area, grabs her kid by the hand, and looks down, infuriated, at Corwin.

WOMAN

You've got some nerve! You ought to be ashamed!

**28. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN**

As he rises unsteadily to his feet and with a thin, sad smile—

CORWIN

Madam, I am ashamed.

**29. TWO SHOT**

WOMAN

(yanking her son)

Come along, Percival. I hope this isn't going to be a traumatic experience for you!

(Then over her shoulder

toward Corwin, she spits this out)

Sot!

At this moment, people overhearing the loud tone have stopped and are staring at the woman and then at Corwin. Dundee, the manager, comes into the frame, obviously desperately frightened by what's going on, and his voice takes on the unctuous placating quality of every hard-pressed store manager in the world.

DUNDEE

Is there some trouble here, madam?

WOMAN

Trouble? No, there's no trouble—except this is the last time I trade in this store! It seems you hire your Santa Clauses out of a gutter!

**30. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN**

He takes a step over toward her.

**31. CLOSE SHOT WOMAN**

Her face twisted with anger.

WOMAN

Come on, Percival.

She barges into two people, pushes them bodily out of the way, and drags the child down the aisle.

**32. CLOSE SHOT DUNDEE**

As he whirls around, icy-faced, toward Corwin, looks briefly at the salespeople who have congregated around.

DUNDEE

(tersely)

All right, back to work.

Back to your positions!

**33. TRACK SHOT WITH HIM**

As he walks toward Corwin, stopping by the velvet rope that encloses the area, and then, with fierce expression, waggles a finger toward Corwin, who unsteadily walks over to him.

DUNDEE

And now, Mr. Kris Kringle of the lower depths . . . since we are only a few hours from closing, it is my distinct pleasure to inform you that there is no more need for your services. You've had it! Now get out of here!

**34. MED. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN**

As with sagging shoulders and looking less and less like even a caricature of Santa Claus, he starts to walk slowly down the steps. Over



# The Night of the Meek

his shoulder we see Dundee staring at him coldly. As he passes the manager -  
CORWIN

It'll be my pleasure.

DUNDEE  
(on platform)

And get that moth-eaten red suit back to where you rented it from before you really tie one on and destroy it for good and all, you drunk.

## 35. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN

As he stops, looks at the manager, smiles gently.  
CORWIN

(comes back up platform)

Thank you ever so much, Mr. Dundee! As to my drinking - this is indefensible and you have my abject apologies. I find of late that I have very little choice in the matter of expressing emotions. I can either drink or I can ... weep. And drinking is so much more subtle.

DUNDEE

Will you please leave.

CORWIN

But as for my insubordination -

(He shakes his head)

I was not rude to that woman! Someone should remind her that Christmas isn't just barging up and down department store aisles and pushing people out of the way.

DUNDEE

Corwin!

CORWIN

Someone should tell her that Christmas is something quite different than that. It's richer and finer and truer and ... and it should come with patience and love and charity and compassion - (He looks away, his voice very soft)

That's what I would have told her ... had she given me the chance!

## 36. CLOSE SHOT DUNDEE

(leily)

How philosophical, Mr. Corwin! Perhaps as your parting words you can tell us how we go about living up to these wondrous Yule standards which you so graciously laid down for us?

## 37. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN

He looks up and there's no smile now.

CORWIN

(Softly, shaking his head)

I don't know how to tell you.

(Turns)

I don't know how to tell at all. All I know is that I'm an aging, purposeless relic of another time and I live in a dirty rooming house on a street that's filled with hungry kids and shabby people, where the only thing to come down the chimney on Christmas Eve is more poverty.

DUNDEE

Keep your voice down.

CORWIN

As you know, another reason I drink - so that when I walk down the tenements, I can really think that they're the North Pole and the children are elves and that I'm really Santa Claus bringing a bag of wondrous things for all of them.

(He looks down to the floor.)

I wish, Mr. Dundee ... on just one Christmas ... only one ... that I could see some of ... the hopeless ones and the dreamless ones ...

(he looks up)

Just on one Christmas ... I'd like to see the meek inherit the earth!

(He nods slowly)

That's why I drink, Mr. Dundee, and that's why I weep.

He takes a deep breath, smiles, turns, and shuffles away down the aisle, watched by fascinated salespeople and customers, who whisper among themselves about the strange little man with the odd way of speaking and the extremely odd things that he says.

DISSOLVE TO:

## 38. EXT. STREET NIGHT

Snow cascades down in driving sheets of wet white.

## 39. TRACK SHOT - CORWIN

As he walks toward the camera and then suddenly stops. The sound of the wind has also stopped, and there's a sudden and utter silence. Over this, we hear the sound of sleigh bells. Corwin tilts his head, looking up toward the sky and then around. The sound of the sleigh bells persists. Corwin looks off, puzzled, then starts to walk again. When he does so, the wind comes up and it's almost as if he were satisfied that, for a moment, he was suffering either an illusion or had not yet completely sobered up.

## 40. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN

As once again he stops and again the wind has stopped and this time the sleigh bells are persistent and much louder.

## 41. LONG SHOT CORWIN

As he starts to step in front of the entrance to an alley. At this moment, there's the sound of a shrieking, caterwauling cat.

## 42. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN

As he turns to stare toward the alley.

## 43. CLOSE SHOT A ROW OF GAREAGE CANS

And a cat that suddenly leaps off of them and disappears into the darkness. In the

process, it tips over a big burlap bag.

#### 44. CLOST SHOT THE BAG

As it lands on the ground. The top seam splits, and a couple of old empty cans roll out.

#### 45. DIFFERENT ANGLE CORWIN

As he walks over, retrieves a few with his hands, shoves them back inside the bag, then starts to hoist the bag on top of the garbage cans again. It tips, starts to fall again, and Corwin starts to carry it over toward the end of the cans, lugging it over his shoulder much as the real Kris Kringle might do in his nocturnal deliveries.

#### 46. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AT CORWIN

As he carries the burlap bag.

#### 47. TOP HAT SHOT WAIST-HIGH LOOKING TOWARD CORWIN

As he approaches the camera from the other end of the garbage cans. He suddenly stops in his tracks as once again all sounds stop and he looks up, wide-eyed, as again he hears the sound of sleigh bells and this time, tiny hoof beats as if from a group of animals. He very slowly lets the burlap bag drop from his shoulder, where it tips again and falls forward.

#### 48. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT CORWIN

As his eyes slowly look toward the ground. He reacts.

#### 49. CLOSE SHOT THE GROUND

Where the burlap bag lies on its side, its top open. But protruding out of its open end is a toy truck, a doll, and evidence of many other brand-new, shiny toys. Corwin makes an exclamation of amazement that is mixed with a cry of joy.



#### 50. TOP HAT CLOSE SHOT OF CORWIN

Down on his knees, as he starts to thrust the toys back into the bag, then lifts the bag to his shoulder.

#### 51. CAMERA FOLLOWS HIM SHOOTING A LONG ANGLE SHOT DOWN ON HIM

As he races down the alley toward the street, occasionally stopping to pick up toys that have fallen, and shouting at the top of his lungs.

CORWIN

Hey ... hey, everybody ...  
Hey, kids ... Merry  
Christmas, kids ... Hey kids  
... Merry Christmas ...

FADE TO BLACK:

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

#### 52. INT. MISSION HOUSE NIGHT

This is a big, square, bench-laden room with posters on the wall with little homilies like, "Love thy Neighbor," "Do Unto Others As You Would Have Them Do Unto You," "Faith, Hope, and Charity," etc., etc. And then a large sign at the far end of the room which reads, "The Delancey Street Mission House." PAN DOWN from this sign for a shot of an angular, spinsterish-looking woman who pounds on an organ an obscure Christmas carol which is more spirited than melodic.

#### 53. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE ROOM

PAN SHOT up and down the row of benches for shots of shabby old men, perhaps twelve of them, who sit there listening to the music, a couple of them drinking coffee out of cheap china mugs, holding their cups more to warm their hands than their insides. Each of them wears the face of despair that can only come with poverty and age going hand in hand.

#### 54. LONG SHOT THE ROOM

Down the center aisle as the door at the far end opens, and an old man hurriedly comes in. We see him whisper something to another old man on a bench, who in turn leans over to his partner on the other side and also whispers something.

#### 55. CLOSE SHOT THE WOMAN PLAYING THE ORGAN

Who continues to pound, and then, as the voices start to intrude on the "music," she plays louder to drown the voices out.

#### 56. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE ROOM

As by this time all the old men have heard something and are reacting, some standing on their feet, others talking loudly.

#### 57. CLOSE SHOT SISTER FLORENCE

Who suddenly pounds on the organ and rises.

SISTER FLORENCE

What is this all about?  
What's all this noise?  
What's this commotion?  
What's the idea of coming in and disrupting the Christmas Eve music service?

#### 58. CLOSE SHOT OLD MAN

Who had originally brought in the message.

# The Night of the Meek

## OLD MAN

Sister Florence, I ain't touched a drop since last Thursday and that's the gospel truth! But I swear to you right now - on account of I seen him with my own eyes - Santa Claus is comin' up the street headin' this way and he's giving everybody his heart's desire!

## 59. TILT CLOSE SHOT THE OLD MEN

As each reacts in turn.  
AD LIBS FROM OLD MEN  
"Santa Claus!"  
"Who's kidding who?"  
"I don't believe it."

## 60. FLASH SHOT CLOSE THE DOOR

As it bursts open and in walks Henry Corwin in his bedraggled Santa Claus suit. Hung over his shoulder is the same full bag. At his feet are a pack of kids, housewives, and various other denizens of the area. The voices are loud, piercing, excited as we

CUT TO:

## 61. LONG ANGLE SHOT CORWIN

As he puts the bag down on the floor then looks up, twinkling, making a Santa Claus gesture of finger to nosetip.

CORWIN

Merry Christmas, gentlemen!  
(puts bag down.)  
Now what'll be your pleasure for Christmas, gentlemen? How about you?

(He points to the first old man.)

## 62. CLOSE SHOT THE OLD MAN

Whose eyes go wide.  
OLD MAN  
(Breathlessly)

I fancy a new pipe!

## 63. FULL SHOT THE AREA

As Corwin reaches into the bag.

## 64. CLOSE SHOT THE BAG

As Corwin extracts a beautiful Meerschaum.

## 65. MED. GROUP SHOT

As the old man takes the pipe, shaking his head in wonderment and an almost numb delight.

## 66. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN

As he looks around, his eyes twinkling, and he points to another old man.

CORWIN

How about you?

## 67. TWO SHOT

OLD MAN TWO

A woolen sweater?

CORWIN

(Making a triumphant gesture with his hand.)

A woolen sweater you'll have.

(He starts to reach into the bag then looks up again.)

Size?

OLD MAN TWO

Who cares?

(Corwin reaches back into the bag and pulls out a beautiful sweater which the old man takes with absolute glee.)

## 68. VARIOUS ANGLES THE OLD MEN

As they call out their heart's desire.

VOICES

"Another sweater, maybe?"  
"How about some pipe tobacco?"  
"A carton of cigarettes?"  
"Brand new shoes?"  
"Smoking jacket?"  
"Slippers?"

## 69. INTERSPERSE THESE SHOTS WITH CORWIN

Dipping into the bag and extracting each item in turn that is called out.

## 70. CLOSE SHOT SPINSTERISH-LOOKING WOMAN, SISTER FLORENCE

Who pushes her way through the men and stops.

## SISTER FLORENCE

Where'd you get all those gifts?

## 71. MED. GROUP SHOT

As Corwin turns toward her.  
CORWIN

Sister Florence ... don't ask me to explain. I can't explain. I'm as much in the dark as anybody else. All I know is that I've got a Santa Claus bag here that gives everybody just what they want for Christmas. And as long as it's puttin' out ... I'm puttin' in.

(He reaches into the bag again, then looks up, smiling at her almost breathlessly.)

How about a new dress, Sister Florence?

Sister Florence whirls around on her heel, pushes her way through the other men and out the door.

## 72. WHIP PAN BACK TO CORWIN

Who has just extracted a huge, beautifully wrapped package which a couple of the old men start to unwrap and reveal a gorgeous evening dress. Once again the voices start with requests for gifts and the old men crowd around Corwin as we can see his arms digging in and pulling out. Smoking jackets, pipes, cigarettes, everything asked for is thrown out into the air to be grabbed by eager hands. Then suddenly there's the sound of a door slamming and all voices stop.

## 73. PAN OVER TO DOOR

Where Sister Florence stands behind a tall, ruddy-faced young policeman whose eyes dart around the room.

## 74. TRACK SHOT THE POLICEMAN AS HE WALKS TOWARD CORWIN

The old men hurriedly move to either side in a spasm of fear. The policeman taps his



billy club on his other palm as he approaches Corwin.

**75. ANGLE SHOT  
LOOKING UP TOWARD  
POLICEMAN CORWIN'S  
P.O.V.**

The policeman hovers over him like a symbol of all the law and order in the world, imposing, and at this moment menacing.

**POLICEMAN**

(Points toward bag.)

What's your name?  
(Corwin rises, straightening out his moth-eaten beard.)

**CORWIN**

Henry Corwin, officer. At least it was Henry Corwin. Maybe now it's Santa Claus or Kris Kringle. I don't know.

**76. CLOSE SHOT THE  
POLICEMAN**

As he sniffs at the air.

**POLICEMAN**

You drunk, Corwin, is that it?

**77. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN**

Who laughs again, and his laugh is so infectious and so marvelously rich and winning that the other old men have to join.

CUT TO:

**78. DIFFERENT ANGLES  
THE OLD MEN**

Who share the laughter.

**79. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN**

Who laughs again.

**CORWIN**

(Passing out toys.)

Naturally I'm drunk. I'm drunk with the spirit of the Yule! I'm intoxicated with the wonder that is Christmas Eve! I'm inebriated with joy and with delight. Yes, officer, I am drunk!

**80. CLOSE SHOT A  
TOOTHLESS OLD MAN**

(Who looks around bewilderedly.)

Ad lib.



**81. MED. CLOSE SHOT  
POLICEMAN**

We can settle this one in a hurry, Corwin.

(Then very meaningfully and with vast suspicion.)

I'd like to see the receipt for all this stuff.

**82. DIFFERENT ANGLE  
THE AREA**

**CORWIN**

The receipt?

**POLICEMAN**

Of course you've got a receipt.

**83. CLOSE SHOT THE OLD  
MEN AND CORWIN**

All of them nod hopefully, except Corwin, who shakes his head. The old men look at one another and their eyes go down.

**84. DIFFERENT ANGLE  
POLICEMAN**

Who looks over toward Sister Florence.

**POLICEMAN**

Sister Florence, collect all the stolen goods and put them in a pile over there. I'll see that they get claimed after I find out where he took the stuff from! Come along, Santa.

(With this he turns and propels Corwin out the door.)

DISSOLVE TO:

**85. INT. POLICE STATION  
NIGHT**

A small, bare waiting room flanked by empty benches. The bag sits on the floor in

the center of the room presided over by the policeman, Officer Flaherty, who nods toward another policeman at the door. The camera PULLS BACK for a shot of Mr. Dundee, standing across the room, who wears a look of contented ferocity. He rubs his hands together briskly, like an executioner, when Corwin enters the room.

**DUNDEE**

Aaah . . . here he is! And here we are!

(Pointing to bag.)

And there that is!

**CORWIN**

And there you are. How nice to see you again, Mr. Dundee.

**DUNDEE**

And how nice it will be to see you, my wistful St. Nicholas—going up the river!

(Then turning to Flaherty, his voice hopeful.)

Do you suppose he could get as much as ten years?

**CORWIN**

Ten years?

**FLAHERTY**

It don't look good, Corwin! Of course, they might lop off a few months if you was to tell us where the rest of the loot was.

(Then turning back to Dundee.)

He's been givin' away stuff for two and a half hours. He must have a warehouse full of it.

(Corwin scratches his head, looks from one to the other, then to the bag.)

**CORWIN**

I'm glad you brought that up, Officer.

(He points to the bag.)

There's a little discrepancy here.

**DUNDEE**

Listen, you moth-eaten Robin Hood—the wholesale theft of thousand of dollars worth of goods is not a

# The Night of the Meek

simple discrepancy -  
(He moves over to the bag and starts to open it.)

Though I can tell you right now, Corwin, that this whole affair has come as no surprise to me.

(As he talks he removes things from the bag - garbage, broken bottles, etc.)

I perceived that criminal glint in your eyes the very moment I saw you! I'm not a student of human nature for nothing. I ...

(Suddenly the cat leaps out squalling, runs across the room and out the door. It is at this moment that Dundee realizes the nature of the things he's removed from the bag. He stares down at the bag then up Corwin as does Flaherty, both men wide-eyed and incredulous.)

CORWIN

(He waggles a finger at the bag.)

Mr. Dundee ... aah ... you have ... aah ... kind of put your finger on the problem! That bag can't seem to make up its mind whether to give out garbage or gifts.

FLAHERTY

(His mouth working before anything comes out.)

Well it was givin' out gifts when I seen it.

(To Dundee.)

Whatever they wanted - Corwin was supplyin'. And it wasn't tin cans neither! It was gifts. Toys. All kinds of things. Expensive stuff. You might as well admit it, Corwin!

CORWIN

(Very happily)

Oh, I admit it!

(Then shaking his head.)

But I believe the essence of our problem here is that we're dealing with a most unusual bag.

FLAHERTY

(Waving him aside.)

My advice to you, Corwin, is to clean up this mess and get out of here.

(Corwin shrugs, moves across the room and starts to put the stuff back into the bag. Dundee turns to Flaherty with devastating sarcasm.)

DUNDEE

And you, Officer Flaherty, call yourself a policeman! Well, I suppose it's a demanding task to distinguish between a bag full of garbage and an inventory of expensive stolen gifts.

FLAHERTY

(Still incredulous)

You can believe me, Mr. Dundee ... it's just like Corwin says. We're dealing with something supernatural here.

DUNDEE

(His voice still dripping with sarcasm.)

In other words, all we need to do is ask Mr. Corwin to make a little abracadabra for us, and no sooner said - done. Well, go ahead, Corwin. I fancy a bottle of cherry brandy, vintage 1903.

(Then he throws up his hands in disgust and moves away.)

CORWIN

(Smiles thoughtfully, as he pauses by the door, the bag over his shoulder.)

Oh that's a good year!

That's a good year.

(He reaches into the bag and pulls out a gift-wrapped box, lays it on the bench, looks at it for a moment, shrugs, smiles, and then exits.)

DUNDEE

(Turning very slowly.)

And now as to you, Officer Fla -

(He stops abruptly. His eyes go wide.)

CORWIN

Merry Christmas, gentlemen.

(He exits.)

## 86. WHIP PAN OVER TO FLAHERTY

Who has opened the package and holds out a bottle with a gift tag hanging from it. Dundee reads from the card.

DUNDEE

"To Mr. Dundee, from Santa."

## 87. CLOSE SHOT THE BOTTLE

As the cork suddenly pops right out from it. Flaherty just sinks back on the bench, unable to stand any longer. Dundee, trance-like, walks over to him, looks at the bottle and the card, and sinks to the seat alongside. The two men stare at the bottle. Flaherty holds up the bottle. FLAHERTY

I think you need this. (Dundee takes the bottle and takes a swig from it.)

DISSOLVE TO:

## 88. EXT. STREET NIGHT FULL SHOT THE AREA SURROUNDING THE LAMP POST NEAR THE BAR

Filtered through the light are falling snowflakes. PAN DOWN with the snowflakes until we reach Henry Corwin surrounded again by people as he passes out toys and gifts from the bag to the laughing, excited people who surround him.

CORWIN

(As he hands the stuff out.)

Merry Christmas ... Merry Christmas ... Merry Christmas ... here's a sweater for you. What's that? A toy?

PAT

I want an electric train engine.

CORWIN

Diesel or steam?

PAT

I don't care

ANDREA

I'd like a dolly.

**CORWIN**

Dollies? What color hair would you like, darlin'? Blonde, brunette, red, or what have you?

(He continues this running chatter as the voices throw out the requests at him and he answers each in turn. Gradually, the crowd starts to thin out.)

**89. CLOSE SHOT STEEPLE CLOCK**

As it rings twelve and then the echo of the last chime starts to fade away. PAN BACK to group shot of Corwin and a few people who remain, each carrying a gift.

**90. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN**

Who looks up and blinks back happy tears.

**CORWIN**

And a Merry Christmas to all!

(He looks down at the bag again, and for the first time it's empty, just a cloth sack that lies crumpled up on the pavement. He reaches down, picks it up, stares at it at an arm's length, then tosses it back on the sidewalk.)

**91. DIFFERENT CLOSE SHOT CORWIN**

As he smiles down at it, then once again in a familiar gesture, tries to straighten his beard.

**92. CLOSE SHOT OLD MAN**

Who touches his arm as Corwin moves off by him.

**OLD MAN**

Hey, Santal Nothin' for yourself this Christmas?

**93. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN**

Who touches the old man's arm in turn, pats it.

**CORWIN**

Why, I've had the nicest Christmas since the beginning of time

**94. TWO SHOT**

**OLD MAN**

But with nothin' for yourself.

(He points to the bag.)

Not a thing.

**CORWIN**

(Scratches his head.)

Well now do you know something—

(He shakes his head.)

I can't think of anything I want.

**OLD MAN**

Merry Christmas to you,

Santal!

(Gets in car.)

Thanks for the car, Santa.

**CORWIN**

Don't mention it.

**95. TRACK SHOT CORWIN**

As he walks down the snow-covered street.

CUT TO:



(He looks down.)

I think the only thing I've ever wanted was to be the biggest gift-giver of all times, and in a way I've had that tonight.

(Then he looks away very thoughtfully, scratches his jaw.)

Though if I did have a choice ... any choice at all ... of a gift ...

(He looks toward the old man, smiling.)

I guess I'd wish I could do this every year.

(He winks and grins.)

Now that would be a gift, wouldn't it!

(A pause, he turns to go, then stops, turns back to the old man.)

God bless you and a Merry Christmas.

**96. DIFFERENT ANGLE AS HE APPROACHES CAMERA**

He pauses for a moment. His face has a strange expression, then he looks around, realizing the familiarity of the place. It's the opening to the alley. He turns very slowly to stare in and his eyes bug.

**97. SLOW PAN TOWARD AND THEN INTO THE ALLEY**

There is the back end of a sleigh and a reindeer. A small elf stands close by holding the team of reindeer. He looks with happy expectancy at Corwin. Corwin looks down at the tiny thing, closes his eyes, and shakes his head, absolutely discounting it. He makes a gesture as if waving the elf back into oblivion and starts to move away.

# The Night of the Meek

ELF

(A little persistently.)

Hello. We've been waiting quite a while, Santa Claus.

## 98. CLOSE SHOT CORWIN

He turns, a little wild-eyed, to stare behind him and then back toward the elf. He blinks, gulps, pointing to the pipe in the elf's mouth.

CORWIN

Oh no.

ELF

Did you hear me? I said we've been waiting quite a while, Santa Claus.

(Corwin, again wide-eyed, points to himself questioningly.)

## 99. CLOSE SHOT ELF

(Who nods.)

ELF

We've got a year of hard work ahead of us to get ready for next Christmas!

Come on—are you ready? (Corwin gulps again and then starts to walk toward the reindeer. The elf goes over to the sleigh and beckons Corwin in.)

DISSOLVE TO:

## 100. EXT. THE STREET IN FRONT OF THE POLICE STATION

As Flaherty comes out arm in arm with Mr. Dundee. They obviously feel no pain.

DUNDEE

Going home now, Officer Flaherty?

FLAHERTY

(Smiles happily through glazed eyes.)

Going home, Mr. Dundee.

And you?

DUNDEE

(With a happy smile of his own, beams beneficently.)

Going home, Officer

Flaherty. This is the most remarkable Christmas Eve I've ever had.

## 101. CLOSE SHOT

As he stops, looks off, then stares at Flaherty, who in

turn looks up toward the sky. There's the unmistakable sound of reindeer bells.

## 102. TWO SHOT FLAHERTY AND DUNDEE

As they gape up at the sky.

DUNDEE

Fla-Fla-Flaherty! I could have sworn that—

(He looks at the policeman, who is blinking and rubbing his eyes.)

Did you see it?

FLAHERTY

I thought I did.

DUNDEE

What did you see?

FLAHERTY

Mr. Dundee—I don't think I'd better tell you. You'd report me for drinking on duty—

DUNDEE

Go ahead! What did you see?

FLAHERTY

(Gulps)

Mr. Dundee—it was Corwin! Big as life ... in a sleigh with reindeer, sitting alongside an elf and riding up toward the sky.

(He closes his eyes and gulps again.)

That's about the size of it, ain't it, Mr. Dundee?

## 103. CLOSE SHOT DUNDEE

(Who nods and in a very small, strained voice.)

DUNDEE

Flaherty ... you better come home with me. We'll open up some hot coffee

... and we'll pour some whiskey in it ... and we'll ...

(He looks up toward the sky once again and then down at Flaherty and his smile has a sudden rich compassion.)

And we'll thank God for miracles, Flaherty!

## 104. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE TWO MEN

As they start to walk away from the station house down the snow-covered sidewalk.

## 105. TRACK SHOT WITH THEM

As over them we hear Serling's voice.

SERLING'S VOICE

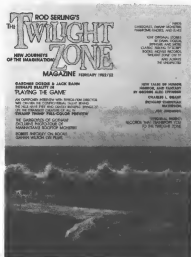
A word to the wise ... to all the children of the twentieth century ... whether their concern be pediatrics or geriatrics; whether they crawl on hands and knees and wear diapers ... or walk with cane and comb their beards. There is a wondrous magic to Christmas ... and there is a special power reserved for little people. In short ... there is nothing mightier ... than the meek! And a Merry

Christmas to each and all (As the camera pulls away on the disappearing figures of the two men who walk

through the snowy night, we  
FADE TO BLACK  
THE END



# In February's TZ. . .



- **Cosmic solitaire.** Some types of mind-games are just idle fun to while away the hours, but next month you'll discover one whose impact is—literally—universal. We're all part of the action in *Playing the Game* by Gardner Dozois and Jack Dann.
- **The beast lives!** You'll get a preview of the new Avco-Embassy thriller, *Swamp Thing*, starring Adrienne Barbeau and Louis Jourdan, and you'll find out how to take a creature out of the comic strips and drop him in the middle of the bayou. Plus a revealing interview with *Swamp Thing*'s controversial director, Wes Craven, the man who gave us *The Last House on the Left*, *The Hills Have Eyes*, and *Deadly Blessing*—and reached a new extreme of movie horror.
- **In memory of . . .** A wisecracking computer provides the strangest of vehicles for one man's journey backward to the love and pain of childhood in *My Old Man* by George Alec Effinger—a story of unusual power by a most unusual writer.
- **And an ordinary tape recorder** bears a message from beyond the grave—a message with bizarre consequences for the living—in Leslie Alan Horvitz's *The Voices of the Dead*, the story of a supernatural experiment so real you'll want to try it yourself.
- **Red thumb.** Aunt Charlotte planted roses, but she herself was more like the thorns. Now she's dead—and other folks are starting to die, too. Heed the warnings, keep your distance, and learn the method to her madness in *Essence of Charlotte* by Charles L. Grant.
- **Surely you've noticed . . .** Just as toast tends to fall jelly side down, subways usually come from the wrong direction first. Richard Bowker reveals why in *The Other Train Phenomenon*.
- **There are monsters in Manhattan**—and by no means all of them are human. In *The Gargoyles of Gotham*, photographer Don Hamerman and writer Stephen DiLauro take you on a trip around the island . . . where strange creatures stare at you from the rooftops.
- **Rod Serling's classic fantasy** about the American small-town dream—*A Stop at Willoughby*—comes to you in script form, complete with photos from the original tv show.
- **In sunny Bermuda**, sipping drinks at the hotel bar, a vacationer encounters the unlikely of fellow guests, who turns out to be—well, we won't give away his identity, but he's one of the most famous men on earth. You'll meet him at his leisure in *Holiday* by Richard Christian Matheson.
- **Doom at the top.** The creaking of an old wooden staircase spells danger, death, and ghostly vengeance in *Top of the Stairs* by Steve Schlich.
- **Unclassifiable.** The census taker's job seems a cinch: "Are you—check one—white, black, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, American Indian, Asian Indian, Hawaiian, Guamanian, Samoan, Eskimo, Aleut, or Other?" This time, though, she meets a household that just doesn't fit *any* human category . . . The author is Jor Jennings; the title, appropriately, is "Other."
- **Starting next month:** Robert Shekley takes over TZ's book column . . . and we begin a new guide to Spectral Music by critic Jack Sullivan.
- **Gahan Wilson's still with us**, though, covering the latest films . . . and we present nine more memorable episodes of Marc Scott Zicree's *Show-by-Show Guide to 'The Twilight Zone.'* Two dollars' worth of good reading in February's TZ.